

The success of every community depends upon the involvement of its citizens. Programs in Lewiston-Auburn have risen up and recruited formerly inactive citizens to become more knowledgeable and involved with our cities. With new and local programs becoming more and more common, the opportunities to become involved within our community have become increasingly accessible.

The Triple Crown race series is being organized by a great committee that is working on getting our citizens involved with the community while improving their health by holding scenic 5K races on courses that travel throughout the two cities. The Committee is successfully fusing together community involvement and health consciousness. The Androscoggin Land Trust and LA Trails are working to protect and preserve our environment and create trails for a variety of different physical activities, including biking, cross country skiing, running, and walking. These groups are run by community members, and depend upon citizens from Lewiston-Auburn to keep the programs running. More recently, Mr. Dempsey decided to include Lewiston-Auburn in the routes created for the Dempsey Challenge. The Dempsey Challenge is encouraging Maine citizens to rise to the "Challenge" and become involved in our community by participating in athletic events ranging from 25-, 50-, and 100-mi cycling routes to 5K running races, all of which start and end in Lewiston. This event also raises awareness for cancer, which supports health consciousness within our community. The Dempsey Challenge, Triple Crown Committee and race series, Land Trust, and LA Trails are just a few of the exemplary organizations that are working to improve our community by placing an importance on involvement and health.

I remember my first Triple Crown series race. It was a beautiful summer day, and hundreds of Lewiston-Auburn citizens had gathered together for the YMCA Fit Fest. Everyone looked so happy to be there, from the young children earning their certificates for completing the Kids' Fun Run, all the way to the people who had never run a race before in their life. What I found to be the most interesting thing was that everyone was genuinely happy, and that I didn't sense any negativity. There were so many people getting involved and so much diversity, and everyone had gathered there for a common reason: to get healthy while getting involved with the community. The start of the race was my favorite. Everyone, from veterans to newcomers, all gathered at the line and were chatting together, but when it came time for the horn to be blown, silence swept over the crowd, and everyone waited in anticipation for the signal to begin. When the horn blew and the director yelled, "GO!" everyone took off, some walking, some jogging, and some nearly sprinting. When it was over, I felt so proud of myself for accomplishing my first race. As people gathered and congratulated each person crossing the finish line, I remember feeling so proud to be part of such a friendly community. The sense of pride I gained for myself and my community that day was something very special to me. I plan to continue participating in the Triple Crown races from now on, either volunteering or running.

The most effective and beneficial programs to our community are the programs that not only encourage people to become involved with our community, but also get them exercising, such as the Triple Crown Committee or LA Trails. With new technology, it is now easier than ever to get caught up in a technological world that, while connecting you to the world wide web, disconnects you from your own community. These programs are not only bettering our community by getting the citizens involved, but also bettering our citizens by encouraging them to unplug for a bit and become active in the community. Getting people involved makes them feel more connected with their locality, which in turn causes them to care more about it and want to improve it, from the inner social interactions between citizens to the overall physical look of our cities. The bottom line is that by getting people to care and

feel like they are a part of their community, they will feel a sense of commitment to its upkeep. By uniting as citizens of Lewiston-Auburn while also placing a focus on our health, we can greatly improve the quality of our community.

Sources & For More Information:

The Triple Crown:

The Androscoggin Land Trust:

<http://www.androscogginlandtrust.org/>

LA Trails:

<http://www.latrails.org/>

The Dempsey Challenge:

<http://www.dempseychallenge.org/>