



Illinois Extension
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

4-H Stitch and Style Academy threads a new path

This summer, [Peoria County 4-H](#), in partnership with [Peoria Fashion Week](#), launched an exciting new adventure for young creators—the Stitch and Style Academy, a sewing and fashion-focused program designed to help youth express themselves through fabric, creativity, and confidence.

The first session welcomed seven enthusiastic participants, eager to learn design from start to finish. From threading their first sewing machines to completing their first projects, these young designers discovered that creativity and confidence can grow hand in hand.

Many parents stuck around to participate in the class. This allowed kids and their mentors to learn about using the sewing machine and constructing garments together. The adults that attended the classes are more confident in the use of their machines, and the class has inspired the parents to sew their own clothing as well.

The Academy isn't just about sewing—it's about stitching together skills for life. Participants learned patience, planning, and problem-solving, all while supporting and encouraging one another. They constantly cheered each other on. Even when the seams didn't line up, they laughed, helped, and tried again. That's what 4-H is all about.

When asked about Stitch and Style Academy's impact, Co-Founder of Peoria Fashion Week, Chanel Hargrave-Murry said, "Every stitch tells a story of creativity, patience, and connection. Our Stitch and Style class isn't just about learning to sew; it's about threading together confidence, community and self-expression one fabric at a time."

The program's success has sparked excitement for what's next. Stitch and Style Academy is set to continue this fall with a new session, giving more youth the chance to design, sew, and shine.

The creativity doesn't stop there—Stitch and Style participants will have the opportunity to showcase their original designs on a professional runway during Peoria Fashion Week, March 31–April 3, 2026.

This collaboration gives our 4-H youth a real-world platform to display their hard work and creativity. It's an incredible confidence boost and a chance to show the community what 4-H youth can do. Likewise, it opens the door for potential career opportunities. Students will be able to meet industry leaders in design and modeling, as well as photography and much more.

This is one example of a 4-H Special Interest (SPIN) club in Peoria County. In addition to Stitch and Style Academy, Peoria Fashion Week also offer classes that include: Editorial Eye (Photography and Graphic Design), MixLab Productions (DJ, Sound and lighting), and Model Code (modeling and etiquette training).

From first stitches to fashion shows, Stitch and Style Academy is helping Peoria County youth discover their creativity, build lasting friendships, and gain life skills that go far beyond the sewing room.



Members of Stitch and Style Academy 4-H Special Interest club did a shopping trip to Hobby Lobby to purchase fabric and supplies for one of their sewing projects. The club was a partnership with Peoria Fashion Week.

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