

EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit

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SNAP-Education and Illinois Department of Human Resources work together to rejuvenate required TANF education

As the Mason County Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program went through a process to rejuvenate their required educational programs, they invited University of Illinois Extension Supplemental Nutrition Assistant Program—Education (SNAP-Education) to get involved. Thanks to the partnership, program participants are enjoying new and practical lessons they can put in to practice right away.

Clarissa Golden-Campbell, Mason County Family Community Resource Center human services caseworker, and Skye Mibbs, SNAP-Ed instructor, met with TANF participants to hear first-hand about their greatest challenges. Clarissa and Skye used that information, their community contacts, and expertise to plan a meaningful class schedule.

“Thankfully our small town has a tremendous amount of resources,” Skye explained. “Our close knit community offered their time and talents and helped us cover all of the requested topics. The Havana Public Library even provided books on cooking, exercising, and other how-to’s.” Topics ranged from budgeting, domestic violence, mental health, wellness and healthy eating on a budget, basic household maintenance, addiction, Real Colors Personality Instrument program, kitchen hygiene, cyber security, gardening, and much more. Guests got hands-on learning including cooking, making homemade laundry soap, blending seasoning mixes, and more.

Clarissa explained that at the beginning, guests were just attending to get their required “check-mark” to meet TANF requirements. Now the revamped program has led to opportunities for supportive relationships and using their new skills to bless others. “When we first started I just wanted the monthly contact with me to be something beneficial and meaningful to them,” she stated. “But it grew into something even better. We did service work to thank the facility where we meet and it’s given people a chance to build relationships with others who are struggling in some of the same ways they are. This helps them be less isolated in a world where depression and isolation have become common.”

The revamped program has created a safe space where everyone can share, which has led to very deep conversations. “Getting to be a part of this group has taught me a lot about how a group of strangers can come together and support each other,” Skye commented. She and Clarissa both agree that this year has proven that the new approach has made a positive impact well beyond when they were “just trying to mark it off their list.”



Photo by Skye Mibbs | Illinois Extension

Clarissa Golden-Campbell with Mason County Family Community Resource Center presented the homemade laundry detergent lesson at a recent TANF program. University of Illinois Extension SNAP-Education was part of the strategic planning effort to rejuvenate the required TANF educational programs in Mason County.

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