

EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit

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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Lulu & the Hunger Monster reading program helps youth understand food insecurity

An outreach initiative helped children across the Tri-County area better understand hunger and how they can contribute during Hunger Action Month. Through the *Lulu & the Hunger Monster* reading program, University of Illinois Extension SNAP-Ed staff trained community readers to share this powerful story with local youth, sparking meaningful conversations about food insecurity and empathy.

“Across Illinois, one in six youth experience food insecurity,” said [Rebecca Crumrine](#), SNAP-Ed Educator. “By teaching children about hunger at an early age, we help build understanding, compassion, and awareness that can last a lifetime.”

The *Lulu & the Hunger Monster* program came out of the Partnership for a Healthy Community Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) priority action team. The team focuses on building events and education during September to build awareness and action around the issue of hunger in our communities. SNAP-Ed developed volunteer training materials and a youth workbook in June and July, followed by the training of 21 volunteers in August. Then these volunteers brought the story to life in September 2025, through visits to classrooms, libraries, and community sites across Peoria, Tazewell, and Woodford counties.

During that month, volunteers reached 767 youth across 18 sites, in 46 interactive reading sessions using the new workbook designed to deepen understanding and encourage discussion about hunger, kindness, and taking action. In addition, the HEAL team also partnered with the Morton library to host a new book walk at Idlewood Park, which brought the story outdoors for families to enjoy together throughout September.

“Food insecurity is a hard topic for young children to understand,” added Crumrine. “Through this story, children begin to see how hunger affects families and also learn small ways they can make a difference.”

The *Lulu & the Hunger Monster* program connects educators, volunteers, and community partners to promote awareness, empathy, and local action. By sharing the story in classrooms, libraries, and community spaces, we help youth recognize hunger as a community issue—one that everyone can help address.

To find out more about Hunger Action Month activities, visit the Partnership for a Healthy Community website: healthyhoi.org/2025-Tri-County-Hunger-Action-Month. For more information on upcoming volunteer opportunities related to hunger or food insecurity, or classroom partnerships, contact Rebecca Crumrine, SNAP-Ed educator, at racumri@illinois.edu.



*One of the special events that happened during Hunger Action Month was community volunteers going to libraries, schools, and community sites to read *Lulu & the Hunger monster* to children. The powerful story can spark meaningful conversations about food insecurity and empathy.*

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