

# EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit

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## Make It, Take It craft days reinforce health and wellness education for youth and families

Incorporating craft projects into educational lessons has a unique way of bringing people, traditions, and learning together. It can also have physical benefits such as reduced tension and lower blood pressure. Local University of Illinois Extension staff have combined craft projects with health and wellness education for a fun, engaging program.

Skye Mibbs, Supplemental Nutrition Assistant Program—Education (SNAP-Ed) instructor in the Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit, has been holding Make It Take It craft days every other month for the past two years. These classes are a combination of doing crafts and learning about different nutrition topics. A typical session involves multiple craft options, youth and their family member(s) working together, and nutrition lessons that go along with each craft project. These topics range from physical fitness activities to healthy fruits to the five senses.

According to Gayle Torres, ATF-BC, a board certified art therapist, “Crafting projects can help the brain send signals to the body that all is well, blood pressure and tension are reduced, resulting in a sense of well-being.” What is also amazing is research also shows things like doodling and fidgeting might actually help us maintain focus and/or reduce stress that interferes with focus.

“These were some of the thoughts that went behind the planning of Make It Take It days,” reported Skye. “I partner with Havana Public Library for this program and their staff bring a lot of creativity to the program too. We also had anonymous donors who have helped us with some of the extra supplies needed.”

A majority of the crafts are made from common household materials that have been repurposed, such as paper rolls, slightly damaged paper, and clean food containers. The kids love putting their creative spins on their craft projects.

“I love seeing what masterpieces the kids can come up with while using simple supplies,” Skye says.

Skye went on to explain how the sessions always include a fun group game and a snack from the SNAP-Ed Eat Move Save website. These recipes are nutritious and can be made without breaking the budget.

After hesitantly trying Strawberry dip, one kid stated, “this is yummy, can we make it when we get home?”

These classes occur every other month and the crafts are usually themed around the seasons or holidays. Each class has seen a growing number and although hosted in Havana, it is open to any school-aged child and their families who live in Mason County.



*Extension SNAP-Ed staff incorporate crafts into their lessons at Make It Take It days, held in partnership with Havana Public Library. Crafting is a great way to reduce tension and in turn improve focus. Combining crafting with nutrition and health lessons is a perfect “recipe.”*

### Skye Mibbs

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