

# EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit

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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

## SNAP-Education program adds Create Better Health cooking classes for adults to program offerings

People can turn on the local news, scroll through social media, or turn on their favorite food-focused television channel in order to “learn” how to cook. But none of those compare to hands-on, in-person cooking lessons.

Local [University of Illinois Extension](#) staff are excited to be able to offer the new Create Better Health program to qualifying adults, through the [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—Education](#) (SNAP-Ed). [The Hope Chest Pantry](#) in Pekin hosted the first series of classes. SNAP-Ed instructors [Julie Dantone](#) and [Brittany Chambers](#) were the teachers.

“We work with the host site to invite participants who are living independently, making their own food purchases, and food prep decisions,” explained Dantone. “The hands-on learning is what makes the class so fun and remarkable. Everyone gets involved and that helps encourage them to try new foods.”

Dantone even incorporates the “polite bite” technique she uses in her youth programs with the adults. “I’ve learned that even adults need a chance to make up their own mind and not be influenced by others when it comes to trying new foods.”

When planning the series, the SNAP-Ed staff take into account cultural food traditions, pantry-available items, and a wide-variety of cooking techniques. The lessons always incorporate food safety knowledge and budget-saving tips.

“In addition to the regular curriculum recipes, we also look to the [Eat.Move.Save. website](#) to make our plans for each series,” Dantone continued. “We love to teach recipes that allow the cook to easily adjust the recipe for their tastes, such as one that says ‘choose a protein: ground beef, diced chicken, hardboiled eggs, etc.’”

All participants will receive handouts for each lesson that are available in English or Spanish. Participants also receive a gift such as a can opener, rubber spatula, or a cutting board to help build their kitchen “toolkit.”

“Pairing foods that participants would not have thought about putting together was a common comment from the class,” Julie mentioned. “It is nice being told that they tried a new type of food or a new recipe and liked it.”



*Adult cooking classes are the most recent addition to the Illinois Extension, SNAP-Education program line-up. Julie Danton and Brittany Chambers, SNAP-Ed instructors held their first Create Better Health program at The Hope Chest in Pekin.*

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