

# EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit

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**Illinois Extension**  
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## Collaboration across county lines increases SNAP-Ed participants

Collaborating across county lines and program areas has been a key to success for University of Illinois Extension programming, especially with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—Education (SNAP-Ed). As the SNAP-Ed program continues to evolve and grow, staff have been able to work together in ways that allow them to expand the program’s impact.

“I have been able to host many programs in Fulton County thanks to the support of my co-workers in other counties,” explained [Elexus Gray](#), SNAP-Ed instructor. “At the same time, I have assisted with programs in other counties. Many of our hands-on programs require extra support and for some of our youth programs, the more adults we have overseeing things, the more youth we can include.”

SNAP-Ed instructors are hired to teach nutrition programs to eligible audiences in specific counties. Many of the nutrition programs are hosted at partner sites in the community. This often leads to having a large audience that requires more than one SNAP-Ed instructor.

“The more hands, the better. When it comes to having a large audience, it always helps to have more than one of us in charge to ensure a successful program. Our collaboration is crucial to SNAP-Ed participants in every county,” Elexus explained.

The Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit SNAP-Ed team is the largest in the state with ten instructors. They continue to make an impact in the community each day. So far this year they have provided direct nutrition education to 3,904 participants. This number continues to grow each week.

“I can’t count the number of programs I have had assistance from or given to the SNAP-Ed instructors in my unit.” Elexus continued.

“Whether it was a planned program that needed extra assistance, or an unplanned mishap, we always have each other’s backs. Last year a coworker had a flat tire right before their Illinois Junior Chef program and couldn’t make it. I volunteered to take their place so that the program could go on as planned.”

Elexus has assisted with several adult and youth SNAP-Ed programs hosted in other counties with curriculums such as Illinois Junior Chef, CATCH, Eat Play Grow, Healthy Cents, and more. Additionally, the team supports each other by sharing their skills in support areas such as video creation and editing, technical support, and graphic design.

“Our team has a shared mission of reaching as many people as possible with nutrition and wellness education,” Elexus said. “We enjoy working together and I think that shows in a lot of ways when we look at the success of our unit SNAP-Ed program.”



*The Fulton County Illinois Junior Chef program was able to reach twice as many youth thanks to the support of SNAP-Ed staff from Mason County. The SNAP-Ed team serving Fulton, Mason, Peoria, and Tazewell Counties support each other in a variety of ways to help reach more youth and adults with their programming efforts.*

### **Elexus Gray**

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