

# EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit

August 2024



Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

## TRIO Upward Bound students learn cooking skills and much more through 4-H cooking program

This summer, students from the [TRIO Upward Bound](#) program at [Illinois Central College](#), in partnership with [University of Illinois Extension 4-H Youth Development team](#), initiated a cooking club aimed at equipping students with essential culinary skills and promoting healthy nutrition education. This initiative involved two groups of TRIO students, focusing on hands-on learning and practical life skills.

Throughout the program, students engaged in various activities that extended beyond basic cooking techniques. They were introduced to essential kitchen practices, such as proper hand washing and place setting. Additionally, the curriculum included lessons on understanding flavor profiles and incorporating a balanced array of food groups into their meals. These sessions were designed not only to enhance students' culinary skills but also to foster a deeper appreciation for nutrition and healthy eating habits.

TRIO Upward Bound director Wesley Garrard said of the program, "Cooking has been the number one most requested life skill from the Upward Bound students at ICC. As we are preparing them for college, it is important to teach them life skills as many will be going off in the world for the first time on their own. 4-H has taught them how to make healthy and affordable meals that will help stretch their budgets without stretching their waistbands while they are away at college."

Students reported an increased confidence in their ability to prepare meals and a greater understanding of the importance of nutrition. One of the students shared, "Cooking class is a good experience because it shows you that you need to eat well every day. It is beneficial because I learned how to use food and food products that are new to me. Cooking has math, reading, and time management. My favorite thing was the banana sushi. Our teachers were really nice and taught us how to make really good food."

The cooking club provided a supportive environment where students could collaborate, share experiences, and develop social skills in addition to cooking skills. "The cooking class was fun and it showed me how to be innovative with little supplies and ingredients. I also like that we all shared and tasted each other's creations," shared another student.

The Illinois Central College TRIO Upward Bound cooking club, facilitated by 4-H youth development staff, demonstrated a successful model of integrating practical skills education with nutrition education. By empowering students with the knowledge and skills to make healthier food choices, the program has made a lasting impact on their well-being and lifestyle choices.



*A new 4-H cooking club was established in partnership with TRIO Upward Bound program at ICC. The high school students who participated enjoyed their new cooking skills and nutrition knowledge. As they begin their college careers, they are better prepared for living independently.*

### Judy Schmidt

4-H Metro Youth  
Development Educator  
schmid7@illinois.edu