

# EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell

## I ILLINOIS Extension

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER  
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*Cheryl Russell, EFNEP instructor, offers a Tazewell County citizen a sample of white chili at a recent food pantry visit at Calvary Baptist Church. Cheryl provides samples with recipes and additional nutrition education as ways to help encourage healthy eating.*

## Extension staff help address food insecurity in Tazewell County

For almost four years, University of Illinois Extension in the Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit has extended the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) to reach not only Peoria but also Tazewell County to help address food insecurity and associated health issues that may arise from it. EFNEP staff teach citizens at food pantries and local organizations to help them better understand nutrition and strategies to buy healthy food on a budget.

Statistics show food insecurity in Tazewell County to be 9.7% for adults and 15.5% for children. The latest population count for Tazewell County was 132,328, which would equate to 12,836 adults and 20,511 children being food insecure. The definition of food insecurity is not having access or availability to proper food. The root cause of most food insecurity is poverty.

To meet this growing need, over 40 food pantries now exist in Peoria and Tazewell counties. One public misconception of people using food pantries is that they do not work. Many people who use food pantries are employed; of those who don't work, many are elderly or disabled.

Why then, can people not afford food? One major reason is that food can be expensive and many jobs do not pay well. Often people living in poverty live in food deserts, where healthy food access is not available within close proximity. Lack of healthy food leads to chronic health problems such as diabetes and obesity. People who live in food-insecure areas have twice the rate of type 2 diabetes as other people. Children, the elderly, and ethnic minorities are the groups most affected by food insecurity.

Cheryl Russell, EFNEP instructor, currently serves the following programs teaching nutrition education in Tazewell County:

- Hope Chest Food Pantry, Pekin
- Calvary Baptist Food Pantry, Pekin
- Liberty Baptist Food Pantry, Pekin
- Illinois Department of Human Services, Pekin
- Housing Authority, Pekin and Washington
- Rogy's Childcare, Pekin

The latest EFNEP program impact data (2018 ) shows the following positive impacts related to food insecurity:



- 96% of participants showed improvement in eating healthier foods such as more fruits and vegetables
- 52% showed improvement in one or more food security indicators such as having enough money for food
- 78% improved in one or more food resource management practices such as planning meals before shopping, making a shopping list, and cooking more dinners at home.