

EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

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Healthy Cents curriculum teaches adult SNAP-Education audiences financial avenues to health and wellness

Educating people about nutritious foods and exercise is just the first step in helping people improve their health and wellness. Teaching people how to afford and cook the food, where to buy or how to grow the food, and how to have time to manage it all are other important pieces of the puzzle. Healthy Cents is a [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—Education](#) (SNAP-Education) curriculum that local University of Illinois Extension staff are teaching to adult audiences.

“I have noticed my participants are excited for the lessons,” stated Jo Elyn Smith, SNAP-Education instructor. “I think they like that they are new topics and generate a lot of good conversations among the group.”

The curriculum includes 12 lessons on a wide range of topics, all related to being healthy, such as meal planning, gardening, and budgeting. Instructors share easy-to-make, healthy recipes and samples. During each class, Jo Elyn works with her groups to set a weekly goal. She explained that they come back to class excited to discuss how that week’s goal went.

“Recently I taught a lesson about community assistance programs to a group of ladies at [Southside Community Center](#),” Smith continued. “They were very interested in learning more and sharing their experiences with programs like Share, WIC, and SNAP. Together we did some further investigating of local food co-ops and discovered plans for [Peoria Harvest Co-op](#).”

During the program at Southside Community Center, the ladies enjoyed a sample of [Blueberry Vanilla Overnight Oats](#). Further education happens as the group shares their own ideas about how they may adapt the recipe for their family (different berries or different types of milk) and where they can find the ingredients. Transportation to larger grocery stores can be a challenge, so a key to SNAP-Education programs is to help people understand where they can access healthy food.

“These ladies really helped each other find different avenues of resources,” Smith stated. “They really think for themselves and help each other with resources to help their families.”

Smith has similar stories from all of her Healthy Cents class sites. She is currently partnering with Dream Center Peoria, House of Hope, Salvation Army, B’nai B’rith, Southside Community Center, Southside Mission, Sterling Towers, all in Peoria. Some are stand-alone SNAP-Education programs while others are agency coordinated programs in which SNAP-Education is one part of it.



Photo by Anita Wilkinson | Illinois Extension

The Southside Community Center is one of the agencies that Jo Elyn Smith works with on a regular basis to teach a SNAP-Education curriculum called Healthy Cents. Many SNAP-Ed programs are included with other group meetings or special events being held at partnering agencies.

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