

EXTENSION
SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell



ILLINOIS
Extension
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER
& ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

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“Motivated to Move: Engaging Children and Staff” was the title of SNAP-Ed Educators, Kaitlyn Streitmatter and Kayla Swaar’s presentation at the 2019 National Child Nutrition Conference held in Chicago. They helped participants better understand the importance of adult-led physical activities.

SNAP-Education Staff Present at National Child Nutrition Conference

Kaitlyn Streitmatter and Kayla Swaar, University of Illinois Extension SNAP-Education (SNAP-Ed) Educators from Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit and Logan-Menard-Sangamon Unit respectively, presented at the 2019 National Child Nutrition Conference held in Chicago, IL. With around 1,600 people in attendance, this conference is an opportunity to bring child nutrition professionals together to learn, network, and gain a better understanding of how best to foster a healthy environment for our children.

Actively engaging in physical activity within a childcare setting is essential for a child’s growth and development. It is important for childcare staff to engage and interact with children in order to foster a healthy childcare environment. Not only do childcare professionals need to fully understand the health benefits of physical activity, but also understand how to engage with children throughout the day to enhance active play.

Kaitlyn and Kayla provided childcare nutrition staff with innovative strategies to take back to their agencies across the nation. Participants left the session with a better understanding of how to engage children during indoor and outdoor play using fun and innovative strategies. With these skills, early childcare providers will be able to improve the health & wellness environment and provide a foundation for healthy child development.

Early childcare professionals have the ability to influence and mold the food and activity habits among children each day. Children learn behaviors from adults, and childcare staff are one of the adults children see regularly and admire. The choices and behaviors we make each day lead to habits, and these habits good or bad start developing in the early years and can follow us into our adult life. Hence, incorporating healthy eating and physical activity in early childcare centers are essential for the whole child’s health.

Physical activity increases children’s strength, flexibility, and endurance, and ensures their brain is ready to learn. Adult-led physical activities have been shown to produce higher levels of activity in children than unstructured play. This is why SNAP-Ed staff have prioritized training child care staff on how to make physical activity productive and encourage development.

“Exercise itself doesn’t make us smarter, instead, exercise makes us more able to learn and focus and optimizes the brain for learning,” stated John Ratey, MD Clinical Professor of Psychiatry.



Photo by Ahita Wilkinson | Illinois Extension

Professional development opportunities similar to what was presented at the National Child Nutrition Conference are available locally. Kaitlyn provides technical assistance and professional development trainings to Childcare providers in Fulton, Mason, Tazewell, and Peoria counties.