



Helping Whiteside County youth, one bite at a time

Recently, countless studies have demonstrated a strong connection between food insecurity and poor health and academic outcomes of children. For many years, United Way of Whiteside County, through its “Let’s Feed Our Children” summer meal program, worked to address nutrition deficits in the local community. With the aim of providing free meals to all children during the summer, this program is completely reliant on volunteers and donations which differentiates it from other federal summer-meal programs. Even with these unique factors, there are still many concerns, including limitations in funding for quality food, storage, aging staffing/volunteers, and reaching all children in need in a large county.

As part of University of Illinois Extension’s “Health Equity Achieved Together” initiative, a cross-disciplinary team from Illinois Extension’s Whiteside office, including colleagues from SNAP-Ed, Community and Economic Development, and Marketing, saw an opportunity to launch and fund a planning project to assist in addressing a number of these concerns. The project is intended to foster collaboration among community partners while bringing partners together to develop strategies to improve access to food in the communities and to increase the nutritional value of the meal programs.

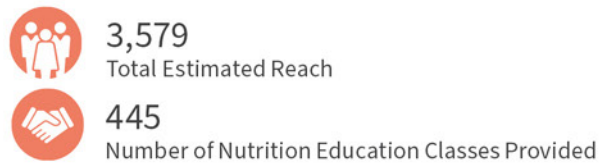
Although still early in the two-year timeline, the Extension team has succeeded in creating a broad-based regional committee which is working to collect community input to better define the region’s needs and to develop appropriate and viable solutions. The team is optimistic that, through this innovative and collaborative approach, potentially thousands of youth in Whiteside County will be better equipped to lead healthy, productive lives for generations to come. The project has the potential to be replicated in neighboring counties and positively impact the lives of even more children.



SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM EDUCATION

SNAP-Education works with Illinois families in need to make the healthier choice an easier choice. Through classes, workshops and collaboration with community partners, SNAP-Education positively affect families and communities by using research-based solutions to encourage healthier nutrition and physical activity choices.

Reach and Impact of SNAP-Education



- 17% Face-to-face
- 83% Virtual or online

Parents who attended the Eat Play Grow virtual classes led by SNAP-Ed were encouraged to be active with their preschoolers. At one session, they make a musical instrument from a paper cup. They were instructed to do different activities while playing the instrument. Several parents commented how much fun it was and how good they felt! Several later shared they now have do this daily with their children using the instruments.

SNAP-Education Community Partnerships

