

EXTENSION
SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER
& ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Kaitlyn Streitmatter

Supplemental
Nutritional Assistance
Program—Education
Educator

kaitlyns@illinois.edu

SNAP-Education staff partnered with U of I College of Medicine and Peoria Area Food Bank on a pilot project that provided fresh produce, nutrition education, recipes, and community resources at Heartland Health Services to help connect hunger & health to the food insecure audience.

SNAP-Education Teams Up to Provide Produce Bundles to Food Insecure Families

With a priority of focusing on food as medicine, University of Illinois Extension staff teamed up with two partners to provide Heartland Health Services pediatric families a bundle of fresh produce in conjunction with nutrition education and resources as part of a 10 week pilot project. Extension staff involved are part of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—Education (SNAP-Ed) effort serving Fulton, Mason, Peoria, and Tazewell counties. The two partners were University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria (UICOMP) and Peoria Area Food Bank.

The pilot project was designed to focus on families who are considered food insecure—i.e. those not having consistent access to enough nutritious food for an active, healthy, life. Research has shown that communities with higher rates of food insecurity have higher rates of diet related chronic diseases when compared to national rates. In fact, 66% of pantry households indicate they choose between buying food or paying for medical needs.

Peoria Area Food Bank allocated funds to procure fresh, Illinois, seasonal produce. SNAP-Ed staff provided assistance in selecting the produce offered while keeping cost, seasonality, storage, and preparation in mind.

SNAP-Ed staff also provided nutrition education to compliment the seasonal produce provided each week. Taste tests were conducted in the waiting area using *Eat. Move. Save.* recipes. Community resources and recipe cards were also distributed. The nutrition education informed families how to eat healthy on a budget, in addition to why and how what you eat impacts your health.

This community collaboration provided a research opportunity for UICOMP students. Students surveyed patients on their family's "food situation" to better understand patient care.

This pilot project is an example of programs and partnerships executed by our SNAP-Ed team to address food insecurity in a tiered approach. This approach helps people directly, helps other agencies serving the people, and helps improve over-arching systems and policies used in our geographic area. With the child food insecurity in Fulton, Mason, Peoria and Tazewell counties ranging from

14.6%–18.9%, improving the quality of food consumed is a focus for SNAP-Ed programming.

