The newest member of the University of Illinois Extension team in the Fulton–Mason–Peoria–Tazewell Unit is Jill Hopps. She began her new role as a SNAP–Ed (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—Education) Community Worker earlier this summer. The majority of Jill’s programs will be based in Mason County schools, early childhood centers, and food pantries.

“Our SNAP–Ed instructors work with a variety of partnering sites to reach both youth and adults with nutrition education,” explained Earl Allen, county Extension director. “We are thankful to have found Jill for this important role. Our SNAP team reaches over 6,000 participants in our unit. Jill has a lot of experience teaching youth and training adults and has already started off strong in her new role.”

Prior to joining Extension, Jill worked as an assistant manager for WalMart and as a third–grade teacher. “I’m excited about teaching once again,” mentioned Jill. “I love people and am thrilled to be given the opportunity to enrich their lives through the Extension programs offered!”

Born and raised in Tennessee, Jill received her bachelor of science degree from Tennessee Temple University in elementary education. She moved to Illinois following college and currently resides in the small community called Snicarte, near Bath. She is well known in her community thanks to her volunteer work as a Sunday school teacher.

Part of Jill’s training has included job–shadowing other SNAP–Ed staff this summer, including Illinois Jr. Chef schools, food pantry activity stations, and adult nutrition programs. As the school year begins, Jill will be working with eligible schools to schedule her SNAP–Ed programs in the classrooms and after–school programs.

SNAP–Ed is funded through USDA Food and Nutrition Services as part of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Farm Bill.) More information, including recipes for healthy meals, resources for healthy living, and additional details about the SNAP program are available on the Illinois Nutrition Education Programs website, web.extension.illinois.edu/INEP.