

A gratifying reflection on a journey with IE

In preparing for retirement from Illinois Extension after nearly 26 years at the Mason County branch office, Joli Pierson finds herself filled with gratitude and reflection.

"What began as a job became a calling, and over the years, it has truly been an honor to serve the people of Mason County through University of Illinois Extension," shared Joli.

She began her Extension career teaching nutrition education in the Family Nutrition Program, which later became SNAP-Education program.

a 4-H judge at the county and state levels," she mentioned.

She worked directly with students and families, helped them learn practical ways to eat healthier, stretch their food dollars, and build nutrition and fitness habits that supported overall wellness.

She watched as many of the youth she first connected with through SNAP programming became part of the 4-H program. She enjoyed seeing them grow from students to 4-H members, to 4-H Federation young leaders, and now some are married couples with children on the horizon of their 4-H years.

She always believed that small changes could make a big difference, whether it was helping someone learn how to prepare a healthy meal, use food safety skills, incorporate daily fitness, or make healthier choices, that work was effective and deeply meaningful to her.

The cycle has come full circle, and those who were once students are now volunteering, serving in leadership roles as Extension Council members, 4-H leaders and volunteers, county fair board members, workshop presenters, and teachers in Mason County schools, where they help promote the county 4-H program.

In 2012, Joli Pierson stepped into the role of 4-H Extension program coordinator, a transition that opened a new chapter in her Extension journey.

Joli shares, "Working with 4-H youth, volunteers, and families has been one of the

As a 4-H alumnus, volunteer, and parent, she was passionate about the 4-H program. "I led my kids' 4-H club for 16 years and was

See PIERSON Page 13

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