STORY OF IMPACT
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS DREAM BIG THROUGH CULINARY ARTS



Zachary got a taste of how cooking can prepare him for a career through his school's culinary arts class. The program is one of the many career readiness initiatives at Elgin High School. Zachary, a senior, learned some essential life lessons along the way.

"Cooking is one of the necessary life skills I feel like every person should know," he said. "Cooking for yourself helps you develop independence and teaches organization skills. You have to follow the recipe, organize your ingredients, and plate the food. These skills carry over into everyday life."

Many communities across the city and suburbs, including United Way of Metro Chicago's Neighborhood Network communities like Elgin, offer innovative job training and career prep opportunities for middle and high school students.

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>
> **ZACHARY**

Alignment Collaborative for Education, the lead agency of the Elgin Neighborhood Network, partners with School District U-46 and Elgin High School to engage culinary arts students like Zachary in internships with local businesses, career fairs, and other work-based training opportunities.

Approximately 60% of students in School District U-46 are from low-income households. The number is even higher in Cook County at 84% (Illinois Report Card). Students from low-income households and disinvested communities may lack access to these essential job training and career readiness initiatives—which is why programs like high school culinary arts are so vital.

"I love being able to make fresh food, and it tastes a lot better," Zachary said. "Once I made pasta, I was like, this is it. I want to cook Italian food and do this as a career."

The culinary arts program at Elgin High School and career readiness initiatives are driven by community-based organizations throughout the Chicago region and supported by United Way. They are powerful examples of the importance of investing in our youth—and empowering them to dream big.

JOIN US!

Donate today and help build a stronger, more equitable Chicago region where all our neighbors can thrive.

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