Extension Work in Greene County Impacts at Least 19 of the “Red Flags” Outlined in the Community Focus for 2011

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. -- Velynda Cameron, a 4-H youth specialist with MU Extension, read the recently released “2011 Community Focus” report for Springfield-Greene County and said she was surprised to see how many of the community red flags are addressed directly by MU Extension programs.

“Just going through the book I was highlighting needs saying, ‘Extension does that one’ and ‘Extension does that one’,” said Cameron.

David Burton, civic communication specialist with MU Extension and the county program director for Greene County Extension, says Cameron pointed out at least 19 red flag areas in which Extension is already working.

“We have either not made our work clear or we have not done a good job of pointing to our impact in these areas,” said Burton.

However, the ability of MU Extension to have additional impact on some of these red flags depends on whether the office gets proper funding.

“Our nutrition program is strong and actively working with children,” said Burton. “Whether or not we expand educational programs in the other areas depends on our level of county funding and the decisions made by our council.”

The Community Focus can be found online at www.communityfocus.org. It was funded by the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, Springfield-Greene County Library District, Junior League of Springfield, United Way of the Ozarks and the Community Foundation of the Ozarks.

The report provides an objective assessment of Springfield and Greene County, and assigns “red flags” and “blue ribbons” to indicators of the community’s health. Areas covered include public order and safety, citizen participation, natural environment, and arts and culture, to name a few.

This year’s report notes the following have emerged as red flag themes: insufficient public funding, poverty, economic uncertainty, child Abuse and Neglect.

Based on the “Community Focus 2011” report for Springfield and Greene County, the following
“red flag” areas are being impacted by MU Extension programs:

**Citizenship:** Voter turnout in elections continues to be a concern; Building a sense of community.

**Community:** Air quality (reduce air pollution); Adequate supplies of safe water; Identification and protection of green/open space for community needs; Preservation of community waterways; Disaster preparedness – community, businesses, faith community and families.

**Health – nutrition:** Overweight and obese adults; Childhood obesity; and Family wellness.

**Seniors:** Adults over age 65 represent nearly 15% of Springfield population.

**Children/Youth and child care:** Increased poverty, higher incidence of child abuse and neglect, and decreased funding for multiple areas related to early childhood - equals less training and support for local childcare providers; Educating youth on dangers of illegal drug use.

**Families:** Vacancy rates due to foreclosures; Homeless children and adolescents; Shrinking financial resources to address homelessness and housing; High rates of domestic violence

**Financial management:** 1:2 single mothers in Springfield is living in poverty and nearly 50% of children in the Springfield R-12 school district qualify for free or reduced lunch; and Affordable housing.

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Additional information on this topic is available online at [http://extension.missouri.edu](http://extension.missouri.edu) or on the national Extension website [http://extension.org](http://extension.org).

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