



UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI EXTENSION

# Atchison County 2025



Annual Report

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**SERVE MISSOURI.  
DELIVER MIZZOU.®**



**Extension**  
*University of Missouri*

an equal opportunity/ADA institution



Office of Extension  
and Engagement  
*University of Missouri*

**VICE CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE**

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Dear County Commissioners, Elected Leaders, and Friends of MU Extension and Engagement,

As I reflect on the past year, I am struck by the remarkable progress we have made together. MU Extension continues to deliver on its mission of linking the University of Missouri with every community across our state, ensuring that Missourians have access to the knowledge, resources, and partnerships they need to thrive.

Through the dedication of our faculty, staff, councils, partners, and advocates, MU Extension continues to make a measurable difference across Missouri. Last year, we had more than 1.5 million educational contacts and generated more than \$1 billion in economic impact. Building on that momentum, your support also helped secure a \$5 million recurring increase in state funding. This important milestone is already being invested in people, programs, and facilities to strengthen agriculture, improve health and well-being, support local economic development, and prepare youth for leadership through 4-H.

We have also adapted to new realities. Even as the sunset of federal SNAP-Ed funding forced hard choices, our commitment to delivering nutrition and health programs to families in need has not wavered. We are expanding investments in rural health, civic leadership and community development to address the priorities Missourians tell us matter most. We are also aligning our work with university, state, and federal priorities to maximize impact, whether in rural healthcare, agricultural innovation or workforce development.

Our strengths remain clear: people, programs, and partnerships. From nearly 6,000 4-H volunteers to county council members, master gardeners, and master naturalists, Extension thrives because of the dedication of those who serve. Our trusted, research-based content was accessed nearly 2 million times and downloaded more than 76,000 times last year, and innovative programs, from soil testing to urban revitalization initiatives, continue to meet Missouri's evolving needs.

Thank you for your continued partnership. MU Extension belongs to all Missourians, and together we will keep building resilient communities, fostering innovation, and preparing our state for the future.

With appreciation,

Chad Higgins, PhD  
Vice Chancellor, MU Extension and Engagement  
Chief Engagement Officer, UM System

# WHO WE ARE

## Faculty and Staff



**Debbie Bennett**

Field Specialist in Nutrition and Health

**Jim Crawford**

Director, Graves Chapple Extension and Engagement Center, Field Specialist in Agricultural Engineering

**Annette Deering**

Field Specialist in 4-H Youth Development

**Randa Doty**

Extension and Engagement Specialist

**Denice Ferguson**

Field Specialist in Agricultural Business

**Wayne Flanary**

Field Specialist in Agronomy

**Gwenlyn Funk**

Field Specialist in Horticulture

**Teresa Mertens**

Youth Program Associate

**Pamela Morriss**

Office Manager

**Katie Pemberton**

Field Specialist in Human Development

**Regina Ripley**

Nutrition Program Associate

**Amie Schleicher**

Field Specialist in Livestock

**Jackie Spainhower**

Field Specialist in Community Development

## Council Members

**District 1- Tarkio School District**

Glenn Scott- Chair

Brian Vette- Secretary

Blu Dow

**District 2- Rock Port School District**

Karen Miller

Mandy Herron

Curt Graham

Ben Lucas- Treasurer

Amy Meinecke

**District 3- Fairfax School Board**

Ky White

Ben Rogers- Vice Chair

Atchison County Extension council members supported local programming by hosting fundraisers throughout the year, selling snow cones at the Fairfax Fair and food at the Tarkio Car Show.



## County Commissioners



**Susette Taylor**

County Clerk

**Richard C Burke**

South District Commissioner

**Curt Livengood**

Presiding Commissioner

**Jim Quimby**

North District Commissioner

# BUDGET AND MORE

## Appropriations budget

### Income

County Appropriations	50,000
Fund Reallocation	5,080
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$55,080</b>

### Expenses

Salaries/Benefits	33,785
YPA Salary	6,813
Rent	1,200
Travel	4,137
Office Supplies/Service	1,857
Postage	188
Utilities	3,058
Insurance	3,149
Extension Council Election	187
Repairs/Maintenance	100
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$55,080</b>

## Contact Us

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## Atchison County partnerships



At the Mental Health Block Party in Tarkio, Teresa Mertens, Pam Morriss, and Amie Schleicher shared mental health resources with more than 60 community members. Extension staff also supported families at the Back-to-School event by providing school supplies.

## MU Extension is a unique funding partnership.

Extension funding is a three-way partnership of federal, state and county government. Federal and state money, through the University of Missouri system, pay professional staff salaries, training costs, computers and communication equipment. County funds support the local office, secretarial and youth assistant salaries, staff mileage and council expenses.

The Atchison County Extension Council, faculty and staff would like to express our appreciation to the Atchison County Commissioners for their continued support of Extension programs.



## Local support

Did you know you can donate directly to Atchison County Extension with a gift to be used immediately or as an endowment contribution for long term efforts. Monies put into the endowment are left forever to earn interest with the county office benefiting each year. You can also direct your donation to a specific program such as 4-H or Master Gardeners.

# UM SYSTEM COUNTY IMPACTS

## MU Extension in Atchison County Community Impact Report

This report offers a detailed overview of how MU Extension positively impacts Atchison County, showcasing the meaningful ways local engagement supports residents. It includes data on the number of students, employees, retirees and alumni affiliated with the University of Missouri System, along with the healthcare and extension services provided over the past year.

In addition, the report highlights the broader contributions of the UM System across Missouri in key areas such as education, research, healthcare, economic development and public service. It features metrics like job creation, financial aid distribution, research investment, healthcare access and broadband expansion.

This report is a valuable resource for understanding the measurable benefits the UM System brings to Missouri communities. It supports informed decision-making, advocacy efforts and strategic planning by illustrating the tangible impact of university-driven initiatives at both the local and statewide levels.

[Access Atchison County's Impact Report.](#)



# GRAND CHALLENGES

## Grand Challenges

The Grand Challenges — Economic Opportunity, Educational Access, Health and Well-being, and Agricultural Stewardship — represent the most pressing issues facing Missouri communities. They are important because:

By focusing on these challenges, MU Extension in Atchison County can better leverage university resources, data and partnerships to empower people to improve their lives, businesses and communities.

This report presents localized data and insights in how MU Extension in Atchison County is addressing these challenges. Each section breaks down county-specific statistics compared to state averages.

[Access Atchison County's Grand Challenges Report.](#)





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through credible statewide programs

## Missouri 4-H for Ages 8 – 18



### What is 4-H?

4-H is where Missouri's young people find their spark and learn by doing. Whether raising animals, coding robots, growing gardens, or giving back to their neighbors, 4-H members gain real-world skills with the help of caring mentors.

Rooted in University of Missouri Extension, 4-H connects classrooms, communities, and families to create learning that sticks—building confident, capable leaders who are Beyond Ready for life. In 4-H, youth discover their strengths, practice resilience, and learn to lead with heart—preparing them not just for what's next, but for anything that comes their way.



Missouri 4-H Agriculture programs give youth hands-on experiences in areas such as animal science, veterinary science, plant science, and agronomy. Members explore the biology, care, and management of animals and crops while developing problem-solving, critical thinking, and leadership skills.

Youth can also put their knowledge into practice through statewide competitions, including **Livestock Judging**, **Meat Judging**, **Hippology**, the **Missouri 4-H Equine Tour** and more. These experiences help participants apply what they've learned, gain confidence, and prepare for future careers in agriculture and related fields.



4-H's College and Career Pathways programs emphasize the pivotal role of education in achieving career goals, creating paths to success through exposure to project areas, mentorship, and skill-building experiences. Programs like **On My Own** and **Youth Futures** give youth practical tools in financial literacy, goal-setting, and workplace readiness, helping them gain confidence in planning for life after high school.

By connecting education, career exploration, and hands-on learning, 4-H prepares young people to be **Beyond Ready**—equipped with the knowledge, skills, and adaptability to succeed in school, careers, and life.



## Legend



Agricultural Growth  
& Stewardship



Economic  
Opportunity



Educational  
Access &  
Excellence



Health  
& Well-Being

### Local Impact

In 2025, Atchison County 4-H continued to grow, innovate, and create meaningful opportunities for youth across the county. Through partnerships with schools, libraries, volunteers, and community organizations, 4-H delivered hands-on learning experiences that helped young people build confidence, resilience, and practical life skills—many of which they would not have encountered elsewhere.

Enrollment & Participation - This year saw notable growth in participation and reach:

- 36 youth enrolled in organized 4-H clubs—an increase of seven.
- 239 total youth served—an increase of 200 youth.
- 7 adult volunteers—five more than last year.

#### Countywide Learning & Impact

Across the county, 4-H programming encouraged youth to explore interests, practice new skills, and experience hands-on learning.

#### Hands-On STEM & Creativity

STEM color-diffusion activities and Art in Motion day camps engaged over 80 youth daily. Woodburning, acrylic painting, textile art, and crochet expanded creative expression.

#### Healthy Living & Nutrition Education

Eating from the Garden and Kids in the Kitchen reached over 40 summer school youth, teaching nutrition, cooking, and healthy habits.

#### Life Skills & Practical Knowledge

Sewing classes introduced 15 youth to hand stitching and machine sewing, resulting in completed projects and increased confidence.

#### Agriculture & Responsibility

Livestock weigh-ins and SMQA certification taught ethics, responsibility, and food safety.

#### Community Engagement & Service

Youth assembled hygiene kits, supported local organizations, and practiced leadership.

#### Atchison County Fair Participation

77 entries were brought to Achievement Day, celebrating youth accomplishments.



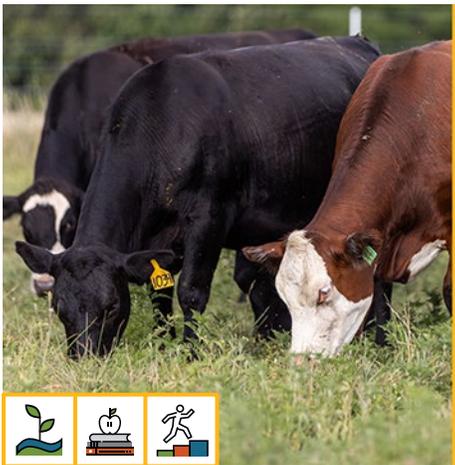


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## Agriculture and Environment



**The Missouri AgrAbility Project** provides practical education, on-the-farm assistance and agency referrals to farmers and ranchers with disabilities and their families to promote agricultural and rural independence. National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), administers the AgrAbility project.



**Missouri Grazing Schools** teach management-intensive grazing by dividing large fields into smaller paddocks and systematically rotating livestock among them. Producers who attend the grazing schools learn how to reduce costs through Improved livestock grazing and pasture management while getting insights into fencing, watering systems and grazing system design.



**The annual impact of management-intensive grazing is estimated to be \$125 MILLION per year in Missouri**



The **Missouri Master Gardener** program enables people of all ages to get in-depth horticultural training and apply what they've learned to improve their communities and educate others about gardening.



**In 2023, almost 4,000 Missouri Extension Master Gardeners completed over 149,000 VOLUNTEER HOURS throughout the state.**



### Legend



Agricultural Growth & Stewardship



Economic Opportunity



Educational Access & Excellence



Health & Well-Being

## Agriculture and Environment

### Pesticide Safety and Applicator Training

MU Extension delivered comprehensive training to educate crop producers on the safe handling and application of restricted-use pesticides, strengthening regulatory compliance and environmental stewardship across the region. Participants gained critical knowledge in pest identification, economic thresholds and injury levels, emergency planning procedures, and the environmental ramifications of improper pesticide application.

As a result of this program, 127 producers initiated or renewed a private applicator license, directly supporting continued agricultural productivity and compliance with state and federal regulations. Participation by county included 19 producers from Andrew County, 15 from Holt County, 20 from Atchison County, 21 from Nodaway County, one from Clinton County, 17 from Caldwell County, 13 from Daviess County, and 21 from Platte and Clay Counties.

Following Private Applicator Training, Extension agriculture staff expanded learning through “hot topic” sessions addressing emerging issues and innovations in horticulture, agricultural engineering, agronomy, livestock production, and agricultural business. Additional specialized training was also provided for aerial application and non-soil fumigation, ensuring applicators were certified to safely apply pesticides in grain bins and utilize drones when needed.

Together, these efforts enhanced producer knowledge, supported safe and efficient pesticide use, and reinforced Extension’s role in promoting sustainable and responsible agricultural practices.



### Strengthening Communities Through Horticulture Education and Access

Educational programming formed the backbone of horticulture outreach in 2025. Residents engaged in a wide range of learning opportunities, including Garden Hour, Extension Master Gardener, Master Pollinator Steward, Garden ‘n Grow, Private Pesticide Applicator Training, Selling at a Farmers Market, and Women in Agriculture programs.

Participants reported practical, immediate impacts on their households and communities. Garden Hour participants shared that they were now able to identify and remove invasive species, reduce reliance on chemical inputs, and adopt cultural practices such as mulching and cover crops to improve soil health. Across counties, these practices contributed to reduced input costs, improved environmental outcomes, and healthier landscapes in both rural and urban settings.

### Women in Agriculture Programs

Women producers across Atchison, Holt, and Nodaway Counties continued to benefit from a mix of in-person and virtual learning opportunities. The Atchison, Holt, and Nodaway Women in Agriculture event was held in August, which featured demonstrations, a keynote presentation, vendors, and networking opportunities. Participants also engaged in the year-round “Pixels of Production” webinars, which covered topics such as small-ruminant health, using artificial intelligence in marketing, and nutritional strategies for pregnant beef cows.

These programs strengthen participants’ confidence, technical knowledge, and leadership presence within the agricultural community. With consistent positive feedback and strong



multi-agency collaboration, Women in Agriculture programming continues to enhance the visibility and capacity of women working in agriculture throughout the region.



## Agriculture And Environment



### Three-State Beef Conference

The 40th annual Three-State Beef Conference continued to be a major educational event for local beef producers, drawing 37 participants in Maryville and reaching another 72 producers in Iowa and Nebraska. Attendees learned about the genetics of calving, yearling bull management, and the latest research on pinkeye (all topics that directly influence herd health and profitability). Producers also worked through practical bull-buying exercises using EPDs, helping them confidently apply genetic tools to real-world decisions.

The conference strengthened the local beef industry by improving producers' ability to manage herd health challenges, make informed breeding selections, and respond to emerging livestock issues. Its multi-state format also enhanced networking and knowledge-sharing, creating stronger regional connections that benefit farms across Atchison, Holt, and Nodaway Counties.

### Secure Beef Supply Biosecurity Webinar

In November, 19 producers attended the Secure Beef Supply webinar focused on foreign animal diseases and enhanced biosecurity practices. Participants learned about global disease threats affecting beef production and how to prepare their operations to maintain business continuity in the event of an outbreak. The session, taught by two MU Extension veterinarians and organized by regional livestock field specialists, provided concrete steps producers can implement immediately to strengthen herd protection.

By increasing awareness of biosecurity planning, the webinar helped safeguard the local beef industry and improve community resilience. Producers left with a clearer understanding of risk-reduction strategies that protect both their operations and the broader regional food supply.



An Almaco SPC40 plot combine was added to the Graves Chapple Extension & Education Center equipment lineup. It will provide a huge upgrade to research and demonstrations at the center.



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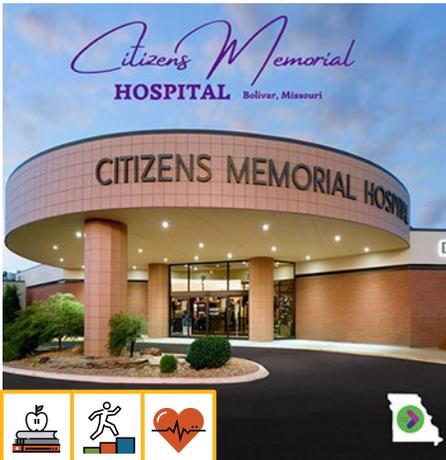
## Business and Community



The **Neighborhood Leadership Academy** provides in-depth leadership training that emphasizes community-building principles, project planning, organizational leadership and personal leadership skills.

**“The overall knowledge that I have gained through this course has been amazing. From how to engage stakeholders in the community, to planning events and hosting meetings, these are all tools that I will fully utilized going forward.”**

**2022 NLA graduate**



**Recovery Friendly Workplaces (RFWs)** foster a workplace culture that promotes employee safety, health and well-being through strategies that support managers and employees, including reducing stigma and providing recovery resources related to the challenges surrounding substance use disorders. The framework was developed in partnership with MU Extension’s Labor and Workforce Development Program.

**As of 2024, 41 Missouri businesses have been designated recovery friendly workplaces, and 2,651 EMPLOYEES have been trained on addiction, stigma and naloxone distribution.**



The annual **Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities** conference is designed for stakeholders, economic developers, businesses, local government, educators and nonprofits interested in increasing their communities’ potential for entrepreneurship. In 2023, the conference offered breakout sessions in Benton County’s shops and businesses, providing firsthand insight into the world of entrepreneurial communities.

**The conference drew 104 ATTENDEES, generating an estimated initial economic impact of around \$33,000 for Benton County.**



## Legend



**Agricultural Growth & Stewardship**



**Economic Opportunity**



**Educational Access & Excellence**



**Health & Well-Being**

## Business and Community

### Community Development

#### Overview of MU Extension's Community Development Programming

In 2025, community development work across Northwest Missouri continued to focus on strengthening people, places, and systems in ways that foster belonging, expand contribution, cultivate leadership, and support long-term community vitality. Serving ten very rural counties, my role emphasized facilitation, capacity building, leadership development, and cross-sector collaboration—often acting as a connector between residents, organizations, and institutions. The activities summarized below reflect a year of intentional place-based work designed to ensure that rural communities are not only resilient but also welcoming, engaged, and positioned to thrive.

Atchison County Residents Participated in

- Neighborhood Leadership Academy (1)
- Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities Exchange Webinars (1)
- Digital Marketing Workshop (5)

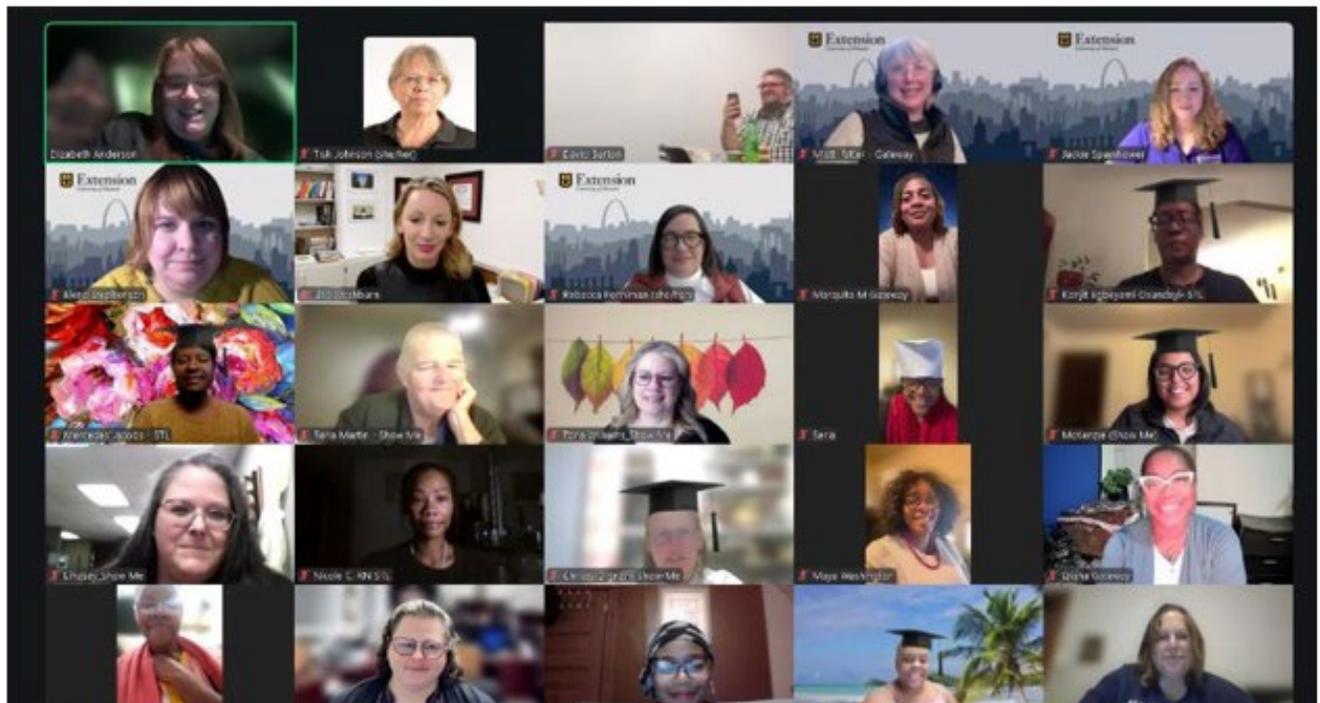
#### Belonging

Place-based communities building social capital and inclusivity through neighboring, civil dialogue, placemaking, and more

In 2025, work advanced belonging by strengthening social capital, encouraging neighboring, and supporting placemaking efforts that help residents feel connected to their communities. Through facilitated dialogue, leadership programs, and place-based initiatives, residents were brought together across differences to build trust, shared identity, and a sense of ownership in their towns.

#### Key programs and activities supporting belonging:

- Neighborhood Leadership Academy
- Engaged Neighbor and Good Neighbor Week
- Place in Action Summit Planning
- Extension Express — NW Region Newsletter





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## Health and Human Sciences



**Stay Strong, Stay Healthy** supports older adults in maintaining strength, balance, and mobility to fully engage in the activities that matter most to them. The program combines safe, effective exercises with practical information on nutrition and wellness, helping participants build confidence, connection, and **well-being** for lifelong health.

**After eight weeks, participants in the Stay Strong, Stay Healthy program showed significant improvement in their STRENGTH, BALANCE and SLEEP QUALITY.**



### Cooking Matters

**Make quick, tasty, and affordable meals everyone will enjoy.**

Learn valuable tips for stretching your food dollars and how to prepare a recipe and sample easy, low-cost, nutritious and delicious dishes.

**“We prepared barley jambalaya in class and one participant mentioned she had never tried barley before. She tried the jambalaya and really enjoyed it. A few days later she excitedly said she made the recipe at home and her whole family enjoyed it.”**

**Cooking Matters facilitator about a class participant**



**Mental Health First Aid** equips people to recognize and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use challenges.

Your Mental Health First Aid is primarily designed for adults who regularly interact with young people (ages 12-17) facing mental health or addiction challenges while the adult version focuses on adults aged 18 and older. Participants learn how to offer initial assistance and guide individuals toward the care they need.

**In Missouri, approximately 1 MILLION ADULTS and 72,000 ADOLESCENTS suffer from MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES.\***

\*Missouri Department of Mental Health 2020 Status Report

## Legend



Agricultural Growth & Stewardship



Economic Opportunity



Educational Access & Excellence



Health & Well-Being

## Health and Human Sciences

In 2025, MU Extension Health & Human Sciences programming in Atchison County focused on expanding access to physical activity, reducing fall risk, and improving community safety.

As a result, residents experienced safer walking environments, increased opportunities to be physically active, and improved strength and balance among older adults—benefits that extend beyond individual participants and contribute to healthier, more active communities across the county.



### Improving Balance, Strength, and Fall Prevention in Atchison County

More than 65 adults participated in Tai Chi for Arthritis & Fall Prevention classes offered at the Tarkio Technology Institute in 2025. Most participants were first-time attendees, reflecting strong community interest in accessible, evidence-based physical activity programs. Post-course fitness assessments showed that participants improved or maintained balance, agility, and lower-body strength—all key factors in reducing fall risk and supporting independent living.

Participants shared that skills learned in class helped them remain steadier on their feet during everyday activities, increasing confidence and safety at home and in the community. In addition to personal health benefits, Tai Chi offers meaningful community value. According to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, the estimated annual healthcare cost savings associated with Tai Chi participation exceeds \$1,100 per person, underscoring the program's impact as both a health promotion and cost-savings strategy for Atchison County.



### Creating Safer, More Walkable Communities in Atchison County

In Tarkio, community walk audits brought together residents, city officials, school employees, and students to assess routes commonly used for walking and biking to school. The walk audit process identified key safety concerns and led to tangible improvements, including repainting crosswalks, improving lighting, trimming overhanging trees, and enhancing bike and pedestrian pathways. These changes made streets safer and more walkable for residents of all ages and helped build momentum for future infrastructure improvements through partnerships with MODOT and regional planning organizations.

In Rock Port, work continued to expand physical activity opportunities using existing community assets. With support from a Health and Human Sciences SEED grant, community partners began planning a marked walking route using existing sidewalks, an important step in a community with limited recreational infrastructure. This effort is increasing access to safe places to walk and laying the groundwork for long-term, community-supported use.



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## Continuing Education



The **Law Enforcement Training Institute (LETI)** offers advanced training on a wide variety of topics, including defensive tactics, firearms, use of force and de-escalation. LETI offers customized programs for all required continuing education areas of concentration.



LETI's **National Animal Cruelty Investigations School** provides training on investigating abuse and neglect of animals. Multi-level courses prepare future animal care workers to handle most types of incidents. Several jurisdictions throughout the country require the National Animal Cruelty Investigations School's training for employment as animal cruelty investigators.



The programming from the **MU Fire and Rescue Training Institute (MU FRTI)** is available to all qualified fire and emergency first responders. Seventy percent of courses are held at the local departments or agencies. With most of the state's fire service personnel considered volunteer or part-time, this local access and flexibility assures training opportunities for all firefighter and emergency responders.



## Legend



Agricultural Growth & Stewardship



Economic Opportunity



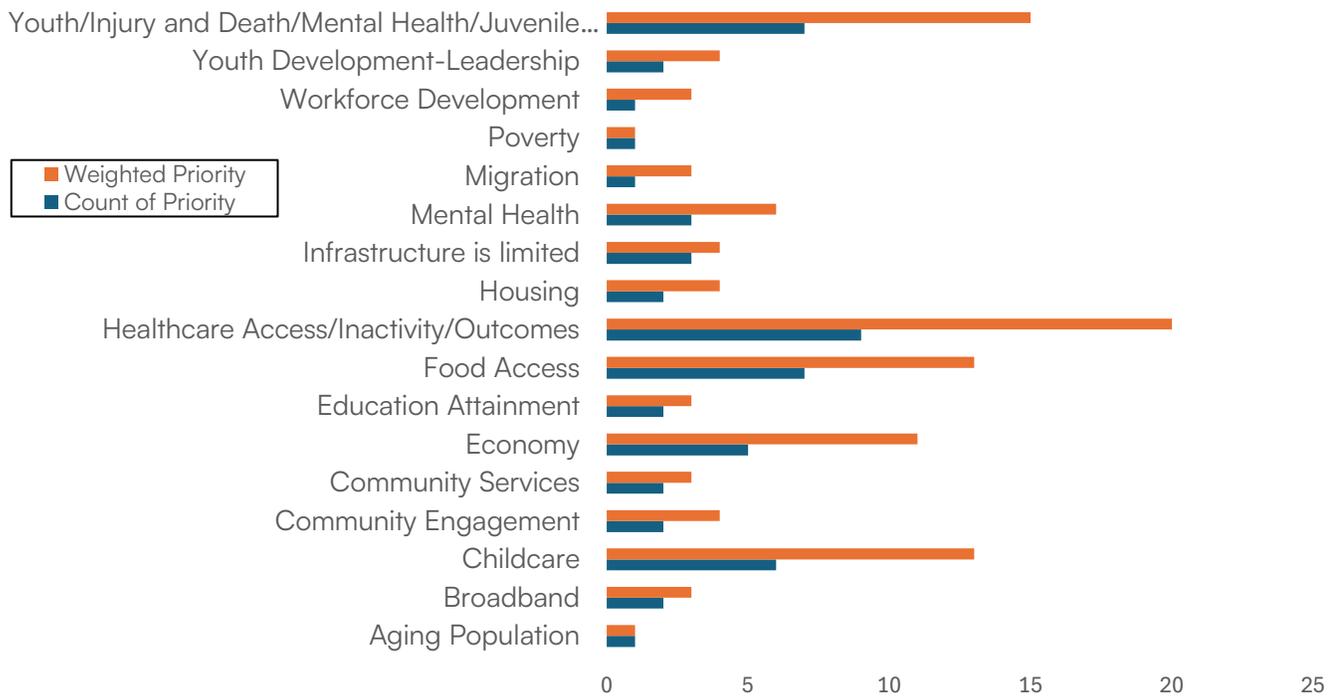
Educational Access & Excellence



Health & Well-Being

## Council Strategy Focused Collaboration

### Northwest Region Data Review and Issue Prioritization



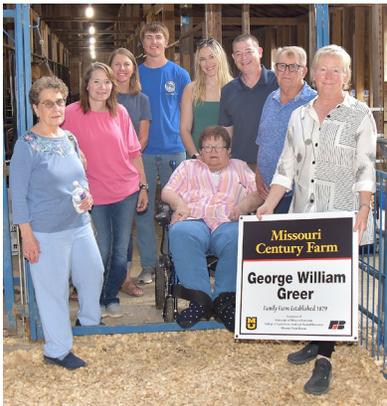
### Council Strategy Focused Collaboration

MU Extension Councils guide local programs, manage resources, and support community needs. For their work to be effective, decisions must draw on both data and local knowledge. MU Extension’s statewide mission focuses on Missouri’s grand challenges in Agriculture, Health, Economy, and Education — issues that are especially varied and complex in Northwest Missouri.

This initiative enabled councils to utilize data more strategically, thereby strengthening decision-making and enhancing local impact. By blending statewide data with community insight, councils identified top needs, set clear priorities, and plan to deliver programs that directly address local concerns. The Northwest EES team gathered information across the region, which was shared with stakeholders and legislators.



## Missouri Century Farm



The Century Farm Program, co-sponsored by University of Missouri Extension and Missouri Farm Bureau, recognizes Missouri farms that have been owned by the same family for 100 consecutive years or more.

Atchison County Family Farms recognized in 2025 were:

- Lone Pine Trust & Burke Farms LLC
- Lawrence Family Farm
- George William Greer Family Farm

## Atchison County State Fair Farm Family



Each year, the Missouri State Fair designates a day to celebrate farm families from across the state who are engaged in production agriculture, demonstrate strong community involvement, and participate in outreach and youth development programs such as 4-H or FFA.

Jeremy and Abby Palmer of Rock Port, Mo were honored at the 68<sup>th</sup> annual Missouri Farm Family Day during the Missouri State Fair in Sedalia. The Palmer family operates a 200-acre row crop, pig and cattle farm.

## MU Extension Leaders Honor Roll

The MU Extensions Leaders Honor Roll recognizes leaders and volunteers who have helped advance MU Extension's work in their communities.

Those recognized were:

- Dr Steve Waigand, Pre-K through 5<sup>th</sup>-grade Principal. Dr. Waigand fosters a positive atmosphere where all kids feel safe and part of a family.
- Brittany Paris, Special Education Teacher for Middle/High School. Brittany is implementing activities that will allow her students to grow in various Life Skills.

