



UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI EXTENSION

Butler 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 – Local Office

Faculty and Staff



John Fuller
Human Development



Traven Crocker
Horticulture



Kim Allison
4-H Youth Program Associate



Sarah Cope
Feral Hog Educator

OUR COMMUNITY

Every year Missourians turn to the University of Missouri (MU) Extension for practical knowledge, problem-solving, and guidance in navigating change. As a key resource for informed decision-making, we play a vital role in delivering this knowledge, fostering progress, and empowering individuals and communities to thrive.

OUR MISSION

As a land-grant institution, our mission is to **Bring Mizzou to YOU**. We bring the University of Missouri's cutting-edge research and expertise to the residents of the county, helping individuals, businesses, and municipalities make informed decisions that improve quality of life. Through our educational programs, we aim to strengthen communities, boost local economies, and promote sustainable growth by offering accessible, relevant, and responsive solutions backed by the resources of the University of Missouri System.

OUR MAIN PROGRAM AREAS

- › Agriculture
- › Business & Workforce Development
- › Community Development
- › Health and Human Science Initiatives
- › Nutrition & Health Education
- › 4-H Youth Development

Faculty and Staff Resources



Extension

University of Missouri

Sarah Denkler
Southeast Regional Director

Jennifer R. Williams, JD
Extension Engagement Specialist

Dr. Kelley Brent
Nutrition and Health Specialist

Cara Carswell
4-H Youth Educator

Emily Doosing
4-H Youth Specialist

Dr. Jason Morris
Ag. Business Specialist

Scotty Smothers
Agronomy Specialist

Jacqueline Pettit
Nutrition Program Associate

Barbara Wisdom
Nutrition Program Associate

Council Members

Douglas C. Rose, Jr., Chairman

LeAnn Clark, Vice-chairman

Tabitha Parsons, Secretary

Terri McCormack, Treasurer

Logan Brittingham, Farm Bureau

Tammy Harper

Harvey Heard (Jul.-March)

Vince Lampe, Butler Co. Presiding Commissioner

Judy Lunsford

Lisa Parson, City of Poplar Bluff

Corey Reynolds

Kelly Shearrer (Oct.-March)

Melissa Stephens

Toni Stoner (March- Aug.)

Maurice Theriot

Tim Ward (March-May)

County Commission

Vince Lampe, Presiding Commissioner

Ralph Stucker, Eastern District Commissioner

Larry Wells, Western District Commissioner



BUDGET AND MORE

Appropriations budget

Income	
County Appropriations	75,996
Total Income	75,996
Expenses	
Salaries/Benefits	25,000
Travel	1,200
Telephone	1,000
Office Supplies/Service	3,000
Utilities	2,500
Insurance	1,200
Capital Repairs	800
Total Expenses	34,700

Return on investment

University System 187,080

For every dollar invested by the county, MU invests \$2.05.

Reach

Review the [Reach report](#) for a snapshot of contacts within the county.

Key Outcomes

- **Delta Regional Authority PROPEL Grant** funded programs for Butler County residents: valued at **\$50,000+**
 - 4-part Grant Workshop
 - Build Your Board (nonprofit board training)
- **USDA Broadband Technical Assistance grant** funded programs for rural Butler County residents valued at **\$138,000+**
 - Digitally Connected Communities
- **USDA Local Producers Grant** funded events for Butler County residents valued at **\$122,839+**
- Health and Human Sciences programs:
 - Tai Chi
 - WITS Workouts
 - Digital Literacy
 - QPR (suicide prevention)
- Horticulture programs:
 - Master Gardeners
 - Gardening classes at library, Sierra Osage, Poplar Bluff Housing Authority
- Ag Classes:
 - Grazing School
 - Bull Testing
 - Pesticide Applicator Trainings
- Youth Workforce Development class:
 - CHOICES at Neelyville High School
- 4-H programs:
 - 4-H Day at the Lake
 - 4-H Youth Farm Animal Art Show
 - Boys & Girls Club activities
 - Beekeeping
 - Shooting Sports safety training
 - 4-H Volunteer Training



Local support

Did you know you can support University of Missouri Extension with a charitable 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 IMPACT REPORT

This report offers a detailed overview of MU Extension's impacts, including data on those 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 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 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 your county's Impact Report.](#)



PARTNERSHIPS

Extension programming would not be possible without the following partnerships. We are grateful for the support we get from these associates.



Poplar Bluff
MISSOURI



GRAND CHALLENGES

The Grand Challenges Report reviews the most pressing issues facing Missouri communities. By focusing on these challenges, MU Extension 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 is addressing these challenges. Each section breaks down county-specific statistics compared to state averages.

[Access your county's Grand Challenges Report.](#)





Missouri 4-H



Tim Tanner assumed the role of director of the Missouri 4-H Center for Youth Development on Sept. 15, 2025.

Missouri 4-H Foundation awards

\$101,000

in scholarships



Missouri State 4-H Council members. Back row: Caydance Welters, Wyatt Covey, Grady Ruehling, Kaycie Hollrah. Middle row: Alexis Kimani, Morgan Nelson, Sadie Jackson. Front row: Alana Kimmons, Kelsey Carter, Lilliann Gooch, Delaney Duncan.

56,000

youth members are enrolled in Missouri 4-H programs statewide. These young people are learning skills, engaging in hands-on activities, and preparing for careers and leadership roles.

Missouri 4-H is supported by more than

5,000

volunteers, donors, faculty, and staff around the state.



Leadership & Personal Development

Butler, Carter, Oregon, Reynolds, Ripley, & Shannon Counties

Growing Leaders. Building Futures



Leadership and personal development in 4-H help youth build confidence, communication skills, and a strong sense of responsibility as they learn to lead themselves and others. Through hands-on experiences, youth develop decision-making, teamwork, and resilience skills that prepare them for success in school, careers, and their communities.

96%

of local 4-H council and committee members reported their council operates effectively, communicates respectfully, and ensures programs are inclusive and accessible to all youth and their families.

“I felt proud knowing my ideas mattered and that I helped make decisions for our club.”~ 4-H Member





Healthy Living

Butler, Carter, Oregon, Reynolds, Ripley, & Shannon Counties

Healthy Habits, Healthy Futures



“Clown College made me feel happier and less worried because we got to laugh and be silly together. It helped me remember that it’s okay to have fun and that smiling can make you feel better inside.”~ 4-H Member

“The SNAC program helped my child feel excited about trying new foods and making healthier choices. I’ve seen them become more confident in the kitchen and more aware of how food helps their body feel good.”~ 4-H Parent

Healthy living 4-H programs promote positive youth development by helping youth build lifelong habits that support physical, emotional, and mental well-being. Through hands-on learning and supportive relationships, youth develop confidence, self-management, and decision-making skills that empower them to make healthy choices for themselves and their communities.





Shooting Sports

Butler, Carter, Oregon, Reynolds, Ripley, & Shannon Counties

Aim High



4-H shooting sports promote positive youth development by teaching responsibility, self-discipline, and safety through structured, hands-on learning. Youth build confidence and goal-setting skills as they practice focus, patience, and personal accountability alongside trained adult mentors. The program also strengthens character and leadership by emphasizing respect, ethical decision-making, and teamwork in a supportive environment.



"I've made friends who encourage me to do my best, and we always look out for each other. We learn that safety comes first and that being a good sport matters just as much as hitting the target, even though we are all still competitive." ~ 4-H Member



Aim High



3,779 youth participants reached across 108 sessions, totaling 194 hours of direct educational programming.



Agriculture and Environment - Local Impact

Traven Crocker, Horticulture Field Specialist

MU Extension's horticulture programming

in the county focused on practical education, site visits, and community partnerships to support local growers, homeowners, and youth.

Impact.

Extension programming engaged 2,147 participants across 40 activities. The county also received 104 direct contacts, and 2 site visits ensuring timely, one-on-one support for home horticulture and production questions. Virtual access complemented local delivery, and indirect outreach connected with 23 community members.

Soil test, horticulture: 46

Program Examples

- Family & Community Education Regional Conference (MAFCE) Plant Propagation class, 30 participants
- Biscuits, Gravy, and Dirt, 21 participants
- Gardening class Twin Towers Housing, 6 participants

Collaboration with 4-H

- Explore More (Eugene Field Elem.) 196 participants.
- Ready, Set, Explore (PB. Middle School): 136 participants
- Outdoor Adventures, 365 participants
- 4-H Day at the Lake, 28 participants

Collaboration with Health and Human Services

- Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA)
- PB Farmer Market, 600 participants
- Neelyville, 100 participants
- Poplar Bluff, 950 participants
- Twin rivers, 150 participants

Poplar Bluff Extension Master Gardeners

In 2025, the Poplar Bluff Area Master Gardener chapter contributed 375 volunteer hours and 124 continuing education hours. These efforts are valued at \$13,046.25, based on the Independent Sector's 2025 rate of \$34.79 per hour.

Chapter Projects

- Ag Day, 83 participants
- Sierra Girls Garden and Grow, 6 participants
- Popeyes demonstration garden
- Butler County Exhibits and More, 165 participants
- Women's Aware event
- Mums fundraising sale

Extension Master Gardener Training: 2 sessions

- Spring, 1 participant
- Fall, 2 participants

Indirect & Virtual Reach

- Two radio interviews on Show Me Today reached approximately 60,000 listeners statewide.
- The Garden Hour virtual series drew 1488 attendees across 12 sessions through the year and delivered horticulture education.
- Sessions are available through live Zoom and posted on the [MU Extension Integrated Pest Management](#) You Tube channel.



Master Gardener Program

Profiles and stories- Poplar Bluff Area Extension Master Gardener Chapter

Butler County Exhibits and More September 25-27, 2025 Black River Coliseum

Butler County Exhibits and More included floriculture, horticulture and agronomy crops, canned goods, quilts, crafts, artwork, and more.



Master Gardeners Chris Waite and Kathy Pucci at the Women's Aware Conference.



Emeritus Master Gardeners Alison Clodfelter teaching the Sierra Osage Girls about dried flower arrangements.



Emeritus Master Gardeners Bruce and Sharron Beck, Chris Wait, and Traven Crocker at Popeye's Garden.



Master Gardeners show students how to make bird feeders for Ag day in Carter County.

Master Gardener Program

Local Impact- Poplar Bluff Area Extension Master Gardener Chapter

Number of Volunteers – 12 (5 emeritus)

Number of Volunteer Hours – 375

Dollar Value of Volunteer Hours - \$

13,046.25 *

(*Independent Sector at \$34.79/hour)

Number of New Volunteers – 4 trainees

Number of Continuing Education Hours –

124

Number of Chapter-led Education Events –

6

Number of Participants in Education

Events – 601

Social Media Analytics – 135 followers on

Facebook



Poplar Bluff Area Extension Master Gardeners demonstration garden at Popeyes.

Community Events:

- **Ag Day in Carter County:** Hands-on learning for second grade students with multiple stations. Students made bird feeders, butter, and learned about soil health. There were eighty participants.
- **Sierra Girls Program:** Summer program for girls at Sierra Osage Treatment Center. The group learn about container gardening, parts of plants we eat, concrete leaf casting, native plants, plant identification. There were six participants.
- **Demonstration Garden:** Maintained Popeyes Garden showcasing best gardening practices, successful plant varieties, and sustainable techniques to the public.
- **Butler County Exhibits and More:** Two members assisted in planning and set up of the three-day event that displayed 350 exhibits of local canned goods, quilts, crafts, artwork, agronomy and horticulture crops, and other fair items. There were 100 youth entries and 65 adults.
- **Women's Aware Event:** Two members worked the full-day gardening event for women. Approximately 350 women attended the event.
- **Mums Fundraiser:** Successful sale and delivery of mums raised funds for chapter.

Agriculture and Environment

Local Impact

Private Pesticide Applicator Training (PPAT)

Agricultural producers in Missouri are required to attend a state approved safety training before purchasing or applying Restricted Use Pesticides. MU Extension is tasked with providing access to those trainings. In 2025, there were **3 trainings offered in Butler County** and **17 producers** were certified to purchase and apply Restricted Use Pesticides.

Soil Tests

The University of Missouri offers soil testing and recommend amending practices to the public. In 2025 there were **39 samples submitted** through the Butler County office representing **569 acres**.

Ag Safety Day

An Ag Safety Day was held for area schools in 2025. The day was intended to bring safety awareness to local high school students. **115 students attended from 6 schools** (4 public, 2 homeschool). Counties represented were Butler, New Madrid and Stoddard. In addition to those that attended, there were 27 volunteers that helped set up, cook and serve students and school faculty. Presenters addressed 11 different topics. Several area business donated supplies, money or door prizes to the event. We plan to grow this event in the future to reach other schools.





Serving Bollinger, Butler, Iron, Madison, Reynolds, St. Francois, Stoddard, Washington and Wayne Counties

Missouri Feral Hog Elimination Partnership (MFHEP)

In 2025 a total of 6125 feral hogs were removed from Missouri, which represents 1020 more than were removed in 2024. Approximately 3,588,511 acres were monitored for feral hog activity. The highest numbers of feral hogs removed in the state were in Reynolds County (1256 hogs), Iron County (944) and Wayne County (811). A new addition to our aerial operations this year was a FLIR (Forward-Looking Infrared) equipped helicopter armed with military-grade infrared imaging technology. Used in conjunction with the gunship helicopter, it was flown to spot groups of hogs and then transmit location information to the gunship. This reduced scouting time and drastically increased efficiency. Of the 6125 swine we eliminated, 2720 were taken by aerial operations.

Iron, Reynolds and Washington County Soil and Water Conservation Districts were approved to receive new equipment, free of charge, to help remediate damage caused by feral hogs. Reynolds County received a no-till drill, and Iron and Washington Counties both received harrows.

Landowners with damage caused by feral swine can use this equipment free of charge. The availability of this equipment represents incredible cost savings for individuals who otherwise would have to pay out of pocket. Having no-till drills, harrows, and other equipment visibly stationed at SWCD offices clearly demonstrates our commitment to restoring private lands impacted by this invasive species.

During the past year, I traveled throughout the southern portion of the state to bring our message to County Commissions, Farm Bureaus, SWCDs, MU Extension offices, schools, community meetings, agricultural conferences, career days, feed stores, equipment dealers, powersports dealers, etc. My goal has been to make an effort to go anyplace there are individuals affected in some way by feral hogs.

Of particular note, this year we had extensive outreach efforts directed toward retail stores. During these times, we went in and set up our display (including our taxidermy hog), sharing many positive interactions with a cross-section of constituents. Some were very familiar with our efforts and successes, and others were unaware of our existence and asked lots of great questions.



The ongoing cooperation between MFHEP and Missouri Farm Bureau is evidenced by landowner signage.



A new harrow is delivered, free of charge, to the Iron County SWCD.

Business and Community

Youth Workforce Development class, CHOICES, at Neelyville Jr. & Sr. High School JAG programs.



Students took a personality test based on the MBTI to learn about traits and which careers would be well suited for their personality types.



Staff from the Poplar Bluff Chamber attended the Creating Entrepreneurial Communities Conference.

Thanks to the USDA's Broadband Technical Assistance grant, rural Butler County residents participated in the Digitally Connected Communities program to plan for broadband expansion.

Thanks to funding from the Delta Regional Authority's PROPEL grant, Butler County residents participated in a multi-session grant workshop and a non-profit board training class.



Health and Human Sciences

Local Impact

Technology Education

In 2025, MU Extension delivered **21 technology programs** in Butler County, reaching **56 participants** through a range of skill-building opportunities. Programming included:

Basic smartphone classes
Laptop fundamentals and multi-session series
Microsoft Excel training

These classes focused on building **practical digital skills**, improving confidence, and supporting participants in navigating technology for daily life, work, and personal organization.

Impact Highlights:

Hands-on, individualized instruction
Support across beginner to intermediate skill levels
Increased confidence using smartphones, laptops, and software tools
Exposure to workforce-relevant skills such as Microsoft Excel

Human Development and Family Sciences delivered **23 classes serving 160 participants**, including:

Tai Chi classes focused on balance, mobility, and stress reduction

A **full-day Saturday childcare training**, hosted in Butler County and attended by participants from **multiple counties**

Impact Highlights:

- Improved physical and mental well-being through Tai Chi
- Professional development for childcare providers
- Strong cross-county attendance
- Accessible scheduling outside normal work hours

Boys & Girls Club day camp, where youth learned:

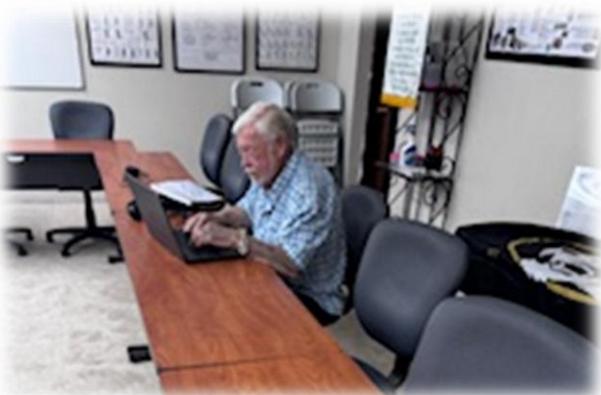
- How to recognize stress
- Healthy ways to calm down
- Emotional regulation strategies

This collaboration introduced youth to **lifelong coping skills** in a fun, age-appropriate environment.

Wits Workout sessions for residents of the local Housing Authority, promoting:

- Cognitive engagement
- Social interaction
- Mental wellness among older adults

These sessions helped address isolation and supported brain health.



Health and Human Sciences - Reach

Local Impact

Veteran Outreach & Engagement

MU Extension partnered with a local veteran to promote the **Heroes to Hives** program, encouraging veteran participation in:

- Beekeeping education
- Purpose-driven activities
- Peer connection and skill-building

This outreach supported veteran well-being and community integration.



Community Reach & Public Value

Through technology education, wellness programming, workforce training, youth engagement, cognitive health, and veteran outreach, MU Extension addressed a wide range of Butler County needs:

- Digital literacy
- Stress management and mental health
- Healthy aging and mobility
- Youth development
- Veteran engagement

This reflects a **whole-person, lifespan approach** to Health & Human Services programming.

Total
44 classes
216 participants



Butler County

Health & Human Sciences: Nutrition & Health

Local Impact– Kelley L. Brent, Ed.D

- Programming and Grant Initiatives had an educational Direct Reach for over 4,780 participants in the area.
- The initiatives indirectly impacted 16,286 residents for Kelley' coverage areas of Wayne, Carter, Butler and Madison counties.
- 24 events were held within the four counties offering over \$188,700 worth of locally purchased food products using USDA grant funds.
- These events were made possible with the help of 46 community partners, 24 local schools, and 72 volunteers.

*Educational programs and speaking events were provided in Butler County and surrounding areas to groups covering a variety of timely topics, including “The Power of Protein” which over 40 participants attended the lecture.



*Distributed over 1,500 lbs. of dog and cat for an area disaster relief effort in partnership with state representative Hardy Billington.



Health & Human Sciences

Barb Wisdom and Jacqueline Pettit, Nutrition Program Associate

SNAP Education

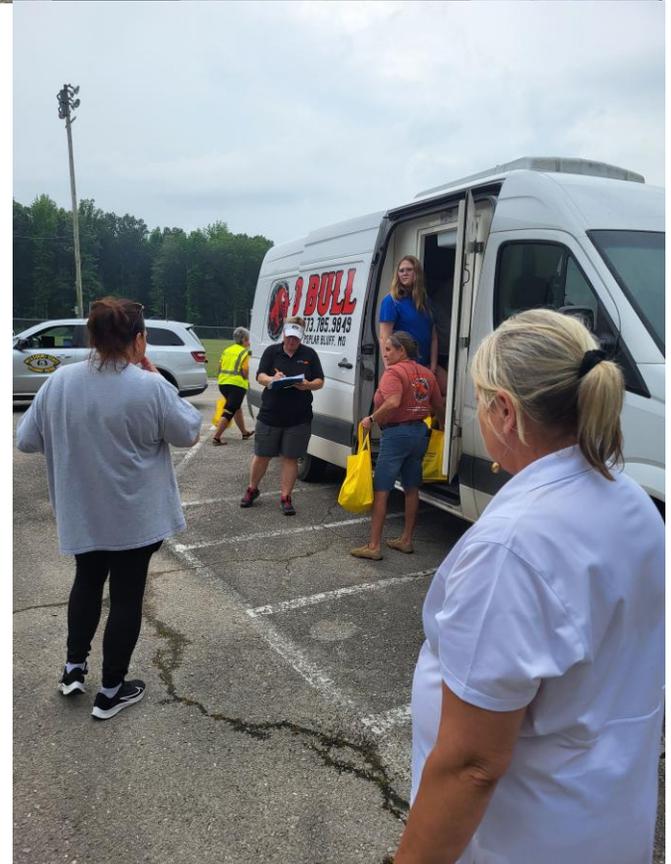
The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Education or SNAP-Ed) brought over \$11,419,598 in federal funds to Missouri in 2025 to support engagement with 70,722 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program recipients and eligible citizens.

Through direct education, newsletters, health fairs, food pantries, and the Show Me Nutrition helpline, 43861 direct and indirect contacts were reached in Butler County.

MU Extension nutrition educators work with individuals and groups in a variety of settings throughout the state to meet a wide range of needs. Whether reaching out to youth and adults through direct education or working with communities to promote healthy policies, systems and environments (PSE), our goal is to help participants make behavior changes to achieve lifelong health and fitness.

Often people tell us how the program has impacted their lives, even years after they have participated. Each day there are new stories that bring home the same important message: The MU Extension Family Nutrition Education Program makes a difference, a difference that means better health and fitness for a lifetime.

43,861 participants
(both youth and adult)
received education in
Butler County in 2025.





MU Extension **Serves MISSOURI and Delivers MIZZOU**
through credible statewide programs
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.



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.



The **Missouri Extension Disaster Education Network** provides education and technical assistance to individuals and families, local governments, schools and organizations so they can prepare for and respond to natural and man-made disasters. Because of the unique relationship it maintains with each community, MU Extension is a key resource for the public, emergency services and public officials.

