



UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI EXTENSION

Caldwell County 2025



Annual Report

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**SERVE MISSOURI.
DELIVER MIZZOU.®**

 **Extension**
University of Missouri
an equal opportunity/ADA institution

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,

Chadwick C Higgins

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

Faculty and Staff



Extension Faculty and Staff Covering Caldwell County

- Stacey Steffens
NW Regional Director
- Chelsea Corkins
Extension & Engagement Specialist
- Scott Finley/Emily Bergsieker
Field Specialist in 4-H Youth Development
- Katie Neuner
Field Specialist in Ag Business & Policy
- Jim Crawford
Field Specialist in Agricultural Engineering
- Wayne Flanary
Field Specialist in Agronomy
- Todd Higgins
Field Specialist in Horticulture
- Jessica Trussell
Field Specialist in Human Development
- Jim Humphrey
Field Specialist in Livestock
- Tarunjot (TJ) Sethi
Field Specialist in Nutrition & Health
- Julie Meek/Amy Albertson
Nutrition Program Associate
- Amanda Cringan
Youth Program Associate
- Sascha Kammer Seib
Office Manager

Council Members

Teresa Fordyce, Chairman
Dana Still, Vice-chairman
Sarah Cramer, Secretary
Cheryl Corbin, Treasurer
Bud Motsinger, Farm Bureau
Dale Akey, Commissioner
Ed Creason
Justin Pollard

MU Extension Council Members:

- Work with extension specialists to provide the county educational program
- Manage finances of local extension operations
- Provide personnel to carry out extension activities
- Elect and organize the local extension council



County commissioners

Dale Akey, Presiding Commissioner
Rex Hibler, Western District Commissioner
Randy Howell, Eastern District Commissioner



Appropriations budget

Income	
County Appropriations	25,000
Total Income	25,000
Expenses	
Salaries/Benefits	10,267
Payroll Expenses	1,818
Non-Payroll Salaries	13,369
Travel	2,894
Telephone	465
Publishing & Printing	1,726
Office Supplies/Service	341
Utilities	1,816
Insurance	1,192
Repairs & Maintenance	525
Total Expenses	34,417

Caldwell County

Many partnerships were vital to MU Extension's success in Caldwell County in 2025. Special thank you to the following organizations/individuals:

- Braymer - Consumer & Oil Supply
- BTC Bank
- Caldwell County Mutual Insurance
- Cameron Co-op
- The Hamilton Bank
- Northwest Ag Services
- Farmer's Electric Cooperative
- Pony Express Bank
- MFA Oil
- Hamilton FFA
- FCS Financial Shaping Rural Missouri Grant
- Caldwell County Fair Board
- Caldwell County Commissioners

Serve **Deliver**
MISSOURI **MIZZOU**



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



Local support

Did you know you can donate directly to *Caldwell 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.

UM SYSTEM COUNTY IMPACTS

MU Extension in Caldwell County Community Impact Report

This report offers a detailed overview of how MU Extension positively impacts Caldwell 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 your 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 Caldwell 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 Caldwell is addressing these challenges. Each section breaks down county-specific statistics compared to state averages.

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

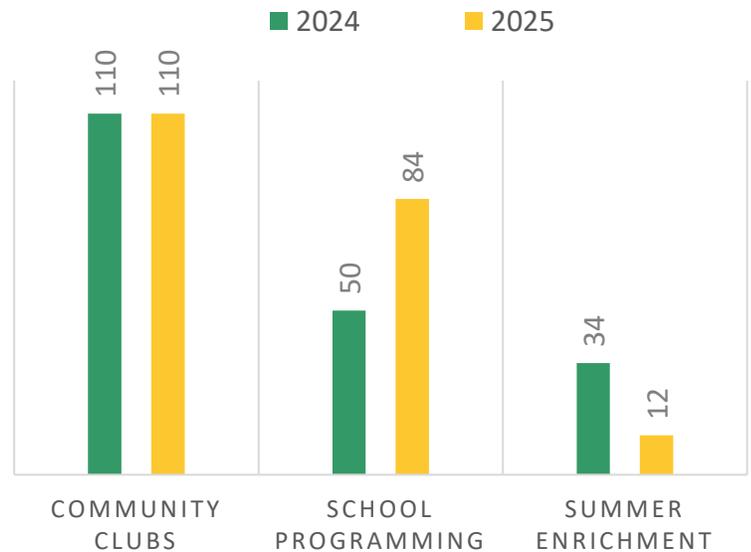


Local Impact

Caldwell County 4-H supports three community clubs that served 110 youth across the county during the 2024–2025 4-H year.

4-H programs are built on the belief that youth learn best by doing. With the support and guidance of adult volunteers serving as mentors, youth engage in hands-on learning experiences through projects in areas including engineering and technology, environmental science and natural resources, plant and animal science, leadership and personal development, expressive arts, and healthy living, in addition to taking on leadership positions which help to mold them into the caring, competent, and confident citizens who know the value of contributing to their communities.

4-H ENROLLMENT



Braymer Pleasant Hill Hustlers

Club Leader: Erika Swindler
Members: 22 kids



Polo Trail Blazers

Club Leader: Lori Heisey
Members: 30 kids



Hamilton Achievers

Club Leaders: Debbie Clevenger & Natalie Hibler
Members: 61 kids

In addition to its community clubs, Caldwell County 4-H reached more than 206 youth—representing 12.7% of the county’s youth population—through school-based programs such as Embryology and On My Own, a financial literacy curriculum. During the summer, Caldwell County 4-H partnered with the Caldwell County Library to offer weekly STEAM lessons for the community, featuring hands-on activities focused on plant life cycles, chemical reactions, and nutrition. Special thanks to MFA Oil for its generous \$1,500 grant, which supported the continued growth and expansion of these programs.

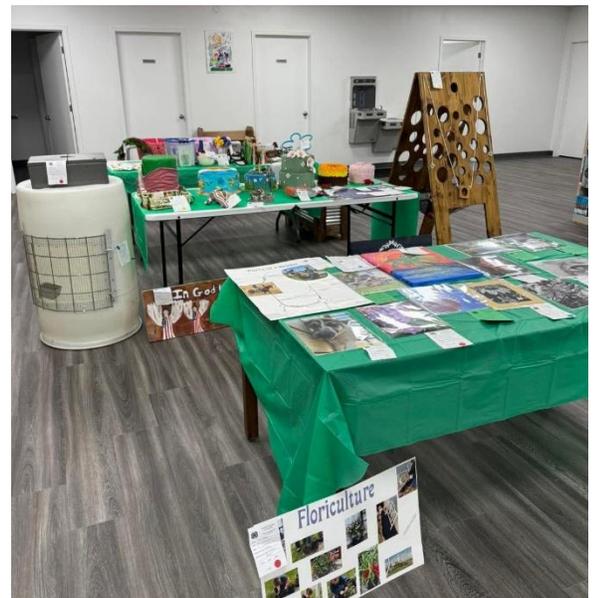
Local Impact

4-H Year At a Glance

- Chick-it Out Embryology took place in three school districts with 48 youth participating.
- 3 youth participated in the 4-H Day at the Capital.
- Taught 250 students (pre-K to 8th grade) egg safety at Hamilton Farm Day.
- Hosted Caldwell Family Fun Day at Hamilton Bowling Alley for 25 members and 20 parents.
- 4-H Council partner with the Caldwell County Library to display 4-H projects from Achievement Day during fair week.
- Top Swine Award at the Missouri State Fair
- 59 projects exhibited at the Missouri State Fair Building with 1 Best of Show selected.
- 15 youth gave demonstration at Missouri State Fair
- Partnered with Caldwell County Library to provide 6 weeks of STEAM programming for 12 youth.
- Taught 365 youth (pre-K to 12th grade) about the safety of medicine verse candy.
- 4th place Junior Team for Archery 300 at the State Shooting Sports Contest.



Pictured Above: Summer STEAM program at the Caldwell County Library.



Pictured Below: Amanda Cringan, YPA, teaching egg safety at Hamilton Farm Safety Day to pre-k to 8th grader.



Pictured Above: Thanks to the partnership with the Caldwell County Library, 4-H projects were able to be displayed for the week for the community to view.

Caldwell County

Missouri 4-H

Profiles and stories



Pictured Above: Embryology Program was taught in 3 school districts and 48 youth participating, giving hands-on science experience that deepened understanding of life cycles and sparked curiosity in agriculture



Pictured Above: Farm & Safety Day at Polo School District taught 365 students critical farm safety skills (poison look-alike).



Pictured Above: Regional Officer Training equipped youth with parliamentary procedure, meeting management, and communication skills through interactive activities like mock meetings and "Design a 4-H Officer." These experiences build confidence and prepare youth for leadership roles in clubs and beyond.



Pictured Above: Jacey Heisey, Polo Trailblazers, was selected as one of 20 youth to participate in National Conference in Atlanta, GA in November. She was selected from her Missouri Recognition Form and multiple interviews.

4-H Volunteers are the true muscle of the 4-H program, extending the reach of 4-H professionals and making a difference in the lives of youth by connecting them with a caring adult to support them in their development. Caldwell County 4-H has over 40 enrolled, screened and oriented adult volunteers supporting the development of youth in the 2024-2025 4-H Year.

Adult volunteers serve as mentors for our youth, helping them transition into caring, healthy adults who contribute back to their communities, which is priceless.

Agriculture and Environment

Local Impact



Virtual Fence in the Community

MU Extension helped Caldwell County producers explore virtual fencing technology through two key efforts. The MU Center for Regenerative Agriculture, 50 collars were distributed, and Livestock Specialists learned how the technology could help reduce labor and improve grazing efficiency.

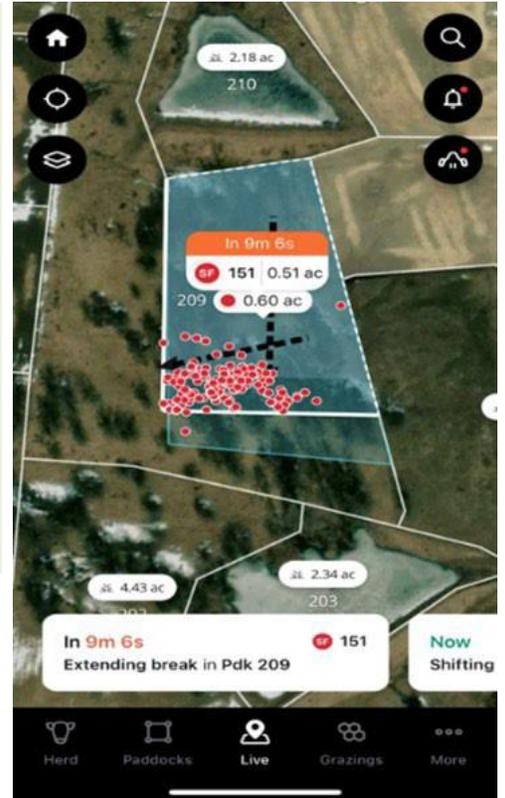
Additionally, 17 cattle producers attended an interactive session on virtual fence basics, learning about safety, functionality, providers, and practical applications building confidence in adopting this innovative grazing tool.

Beef Herd Expansion Grants

In 2025, MU Ag Specialists helped producers secure \$70,000 for herd growth and infrastructure improvements, which helps strengthen local beef production and economic resilience.

Forage & Grazing Management

These courses supported producers with custom feed rations, Grasslands Partnership enrollment, and training at the Northwest Missouri Grazing School. Participants improved grazing strategies, soil health, and profitability



Colored Corn Demonstration Trials

This 2025 research initiative began to better understand yields, agronomic properties, and further uses of the specialty crop. Partnerships with craft distilleries and tortilla plants help drive interest in this utilization.

Pesticide Certification & Ag Update

Private Pesticide Applicator Training in Caldwell County helps ensure safe handling and application of restricted-use pesticides. Specialists shared 2025 market projections – flat crop prices, high input costs, and strong cattle prices – along with strategies for grazing cereal rye cover crops to boost early-spring animal performance and optimize profitability.

Agriculture and Environment

Profiles and stories



Youth & Community Engagement

- **Polo FFA Agriculture and Safety Day** MU Extension trained 365 K-12 students on PTO and tractor safety, grain bin safety, and identifying toxic substances that resemble food.
- Impact: Increased youth awareness of farm hazards and household chemical safety, reducing risk of accidents and promoting safe practices at home and on farms.
- Teachers and FFA advisors praised the quality and relevance of the demonstrations.



The Great Plains Growers Conference

- Over 300 people attended the three-day specialty crop conference January 9-11th at Missouri Western University.
- Denice Ferguson and Katie Neuner, with the Ag Business & Policy Extension team, organized a track session on Business Development to educate specialty crop growers about what to consider as they scaled their business, considered adding a livestock or specialty crops, or diversified into value-added production.



Graves-Chapple Extension & Education Field Day

Attendees learn about using drones in Missouri agriculture during a workshop



Jim Humphrey, Livestock Specialist, presented a Show Me Quality Assurance (SMQA) presentation at Caldwell County Annual Dinner

Business and Community

Profiles and stories

Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities (CEC)

- **5th Annual CEC Conference** (Sept. 30–Oct. 1, Excelsior Springs) had **record attendance**
 - **165 participants** from 46 Missouri counties and 4 other states.
 - Hosted breakout sessions and keynotes in downtown businesses for hands-on learning and networking.
 - Strengthened Missouri's economic pipeline by equipping participants with hands-on tools, networks, and strategies statewide..
- **CEC Exchange Webinars** continued monthly, sharing rural collaboration success stories.

Highway 13 Butterfly Trail

- Grassroots initiative creating pollinator habitats along a 292-mile corridor in western Missouri.
- Driven by partnerships with local governments, schools, landowners, and community groups.
- MU Extension adds educational opportunities to promote conservation and engagement.
- Benefits: ecosystem restoration, ecotourism, stronger rural economies, and community pride.



Build Your Board (BYB): New in 2025

Designed to strengthen governance skills, responsibilities, and best practices for current and prospective board members.

- Pilot session included 29 participants statewide, including three from the Northwest Region.
- Participant feedback highlighted the value of learning about key responsibilities and desirable board qualities.

Neighborhood Leadership Academy (NLA)

Offered across Missouri in 2025, NLA provides in-depth leadership training focused on community building, project planning, and organizational leadership. Participants completed community improvement projects such as gardens, parks, and cultural programs.



What is a stakeholder?

A person, group or organization that has a **substantial stake** or **interest** in a community and/or project.



Health and Human Sciences

Local Impact

Nutrition & Wellness Partnerships

- In 2025, the Family Nutrition team Provided educational handouts at Braymer and Hamilton Food Pantries (115-150 participants monthly) and hosted health fairs and nutrition displays at Caldwell County Health Department to promote healthy living.
- They also delivered Show Me Nutrition and Kids in the Kitchen classes at Hamilton Elementary, Polo Elementary Summer School and Breckenridge Library Center, engaging students in hands-on lessons about MyPlate, healthy eating, and physical activity.



Health Education for Adults

- **Stay Strong, Stay Healthy** exercise classes improved strength and flexibility for older adults.
- **Dining with Diabetes** sessions and additional classes on meal planning, food budgeting, and healthy snacking, help participants live healthier lifestyles.



Mental Health Awareness & Resources

In 2025, Jessica served 64 individuals through QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) Gatekeeper training, offered both virtually and in person. QPR equips participants with the skills to recognize warning signs of suicide, ask direct questions, persuade individuals to seek help, and refer them to appropriate resources.

The program has been shown to:

- Increase knowledge of suicide warning signs and risk factors
- Improve confidence in intervening during a suicide crisis
- Build community capacity for early identification and referral



Pictured Above: Jessica Trussell and colleagues teaching Mental Health First Aid. In 2025, this program:

- Trained adults virtually to recognize and respond to mental health challenges.
- Expanded Youth MHFA training in schools through partnerships with educators and community members.
- Equipped participants through QPR Suicide Prevention with crisis intervention tools.

Profiles and stories

New in 2025:

MU Extension offers *Powerful Tools for Caregivers*, a supportive program that equips family caregivers with practical skills to reduce stress, build confidence, manage time, and improve communication. Led by trained instructors, the program helps caregivers navigate personal care, transportation, and emotional support challenges while promoting caregiver well-being.

Powerful Tools FOR Caregivers

State-wide Partnerships

The Human Development and Family Science team partnered with the Missouri Department of Social Services Children's Division to deliver five, 6-session online parenting classes. These classes equipped parents with essential skills in communication, stress management, discipline, and positive parenting behaviors, supporting families working toward reunification.

The program reached 149 parents across 32 Missouri counties, providing 650 hours of parenting education that positively impacted 169 children. Parents reported applying skills learned to:

- Communicate more effectively
- Manage stress
- Foster their child(ren)'s self-esteem
- Engage in positive parenting practices



SNAP-Ed and EFNEP Public Value

In 2025, SNAP-Ed brought more than \$11.4 million in federal funds to Missouri to support nutrition education for over 70,000 SNAP-eligible Missourians. Through both direct education and nearly one million indirect contacts via newsletters, health fairs, and food pantries, participants learned how to eat healthier on a budget, increase physical activity, and make informed food choices. These behavior changes contribute to a healthier workforce, improved quality of life, and long-term reductions in healthcare costs for taxpayers.

In Caldwell County, 10,997 direct and indirect SNAP-Ed contacts were made.

EFNEP also delivered significant impact in 2025, bringing \$1.6 million in federal funds to Missouri to provide hands-on nutrition education to 424 limited-resource families, representing 1,550 family members, along with nearly 3,000 youth participants. EFNEP participants gained skills in meal planning, healthy eating, physical activity, and trying new foods—habits that support lifelong health and economic stability.

Caldwell County

County Highlights

Profiles and stories



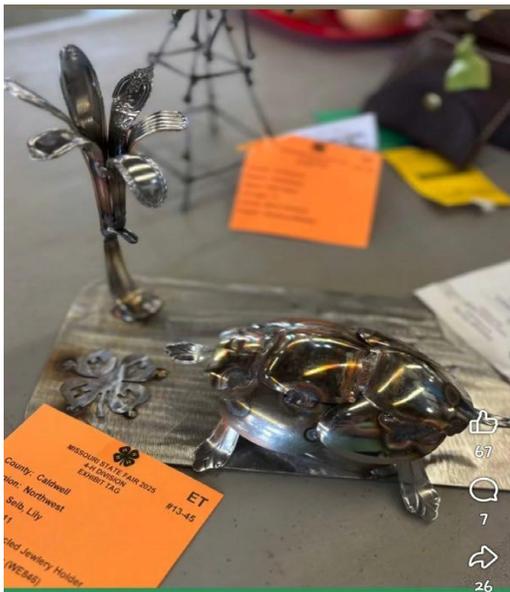
2025 Caldwell County Century Farm: W. E. & Wilma Stone

The Missouri Century Farm program celebrates the lasting contributions farmers and ranchers have made to our country's and state's heritage.



2025 MO State Fair Farm Family for Caldwell County: The Creason's

Each year, one family from every county is chosen for their outstanding contributions to Missouri agriculture and their dedicated service to the community.



Best of Show Missouri 4-H Extension University of Missouri

Best of Show with Missouri 4-H
Lily Seib's welding project, "Upcycled Jewelry Box," received Caldwell County's first Best Of Show at the MO State Fair



Community Partnership for Local Programming

Amanda Cringan, Caldwell YPA, received a \$1,500 grant from MFA Oil for her Embryology program. The MFA Grant will allow the purchase of new incubators for Caldwell County. The incubators have a clear top, providing a view of the chicks hatching, encouraging hands-on learning. The incubators will be at 2 schools, in 7 classrooms and serve close to 100 students.