



UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI EXTENSION

Carter 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



Jennifer R. Williams, JD
Engagement Specialist



Cara Carswell
4-H Youth Educator



Sue Miller
Office Support Staff



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
Regional Director

Emily Doosing
4-H Youth Specialist

Kelley Brent
Nutrition and Health Specialist

John Fuller
Human Development Specialist

Traven Crocker
Horticulture Specialist

Haley Schwantz
Agronomy Specialist

Dr. Jason Morris
Ag Business Specialist

Eric Meusch
Livestock Specialist

Sarah Cope
Feral Hog Educator

Jacqueline Pettit
Nutrition Program Associate

Council Members

Alonzo Bradwell, Chairman

Alan Snider, Vice-chairman

Tammy Lindsay, Secretary

Sue Groves, Treasurer

Nick Bratton

Billie Flesch

TJ Hudson

Brian Keathley

Stashia O'Dell

Sara Sheedy

County Commission

Ron Keeney, Presiding Commissioner

Tom Wilder, Eastern Dist. Commissioner

Erik McSpadden, Western Dist.
Commissioner



BUDGET AND MORE

Appropriations budget

Income	
County Appropriations	16,500
Total Income	16,500
Expenses	
Rent	4,200
Salaries/Benefits	11,367
Travel	3,972
Telephone	577
Office Supplies/Service	1,710
Utilities	1,400
Insurance	602
Total Expenses	23,828

Return on investment

University System	116,957
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For every dollar invested by the county, MU invests \$7.01.

Reach

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

Key Outcomes

- **100 youth** reached through in-school 4-H programs and **24 youth** community club members
- **41 soil tests**
- **14 first responders** trained through Fire & Rescue Training Institute (FRTI)
- **87 youth** at Van Buren High School's JAG program used a personality assessment based on the MBTI to learn more about their personality traits and which careers might appeal to someone with those traits
- **18 cattle producers** participated in an educational program called "Cow College" to learn more about subjects like soil health, weed control, heifer development, and body conditioning scores.



Local support

Did you know you can donate directly to **Carter 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 Carter County - Community Impact Report

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

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



5th Annual Current River Food Truck Festival

One of our vendors, Miller's Bee Farm



People's Choice –
Martin's Smoked Meats





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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.



4-H's Leadership and Civic Engagement programs foster understanding, confidence, and decision-making skills to empower young people to become informed and active citizens. These initiatives prepare youth to become future leaders by engaging them in programs where they have voice and influence.

Statewide programs such as the **Missouri State 4-H Council** and **Civic Engagement Ambassadors** give youth opportunities to represent their peers, advocate for issues that matter, and build connections with leaders across Missouri. These experiences help young people grow as confident communicators and thoughtful problem solvers, ready to lead wherever life takes them.



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.



Agricultural Growth
& Stewardship



Economic
Opportunity



Educational
Access &
Excellence



Health
& Well-Being

Carter County

4-H Youth Development



Abby Price receives Outstanding 4-H Student of the Year at the Salute to Ag Dinner hosted by Three Rivers College.

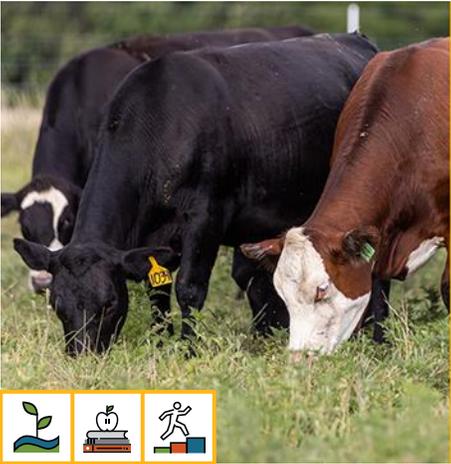
100 youth participants engaged across 32 sessions, totaling 37 hours of direct educational programming.

100% of programs were delivered in person.



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Agriculture and Environment



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 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.



The Missouri Integrated Pest Management Program (IPM), funded by USDA grants, has been an important extension program for more than 30 years. Mizzou IPM distributes articles, pest monitoring data and publications on how to improve the application of integrated pest management strategies and systems in crops. In addition, the new Soybean Growth Monitoring Report is released through IPM every two weeks during the growing season.

The MU Soil Testing Program delivers research-based nutrient and lime recommendations to more than 32,500 customers annually.



Agricultural Growth & Stewardship



Economic Opportunity



Educational Access & Excellence



Health & Well-Being

Livestock

Serving Dent, Phelps, Crawford, Pulaski, Shannon Reynolds, Carter, and Texas Counties

Eric Meusch
Livestock Specialist
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2025 AT A GLANCE

In 2025, the MU Extension Livestock Program delivered education and outreach to livestock producers, youth, and communities across Dent, Phelps, Pulaski, Crawford, Shannon, Reynolds, Carter, and Texas counties.

Programming emphasized grazing management, livestock nutrition, youth development, value-added enterprises, and herd profitability.

- Grazing Schools held in 4 counties taught approximately 105 livestock producers the fundamentals of Management Intensive Grazing.
- Show Me Quality Assurance events held for Dent, Phelps, Crawford, Shannon and Reynolds Counties trained youth on proper care of livestock. Other youth-oriented activities included Ozark Cattlemen's Beef Day in Salem and the Wurdack Education Day event.
- More than 190 producer consultations were conducted during the year, providing one-on-one information and advice on practical livestock management.
- Attended a National conference (NACAA) in Montana to present work done with the Value Added Meats Team and the Missouri Assisting Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers (2501 program).



Good cow-calf herd management has been important throughout 2025 with cattle prices at record levels.

KEY SUCCESSSES

21 in-person programs were held across my coverage area including all 8 target counties.

In the Show Me Select Heifer Development Program the state-wide combined totals for the spring and fall sanctioned sales was 1,691 heifers sold with gross receipts of \$7,035,450. I began working with one new producer in 2025.

A total of 1002 youth were reached in direct programming. This includes Show Me Quality Assurance training in 5 counties, the Student Field Day at Wurdack, Ozarks Cattlemen's Beef Day, an urban youth field day, and youth participation in Value Added Meats programming.

Missouri Grazing Schools continue to be an important program in this part of the state with schools held in 4 target counties in 2025.

Carter County

Agriculture and Environment - Horticulture

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

Across 14 program activities, 155 participants engaged with Extension resources and hands-on learning. Direct contacts provided timely problem-solving and technical support to residents, totaling 14 one-on-one interactions.

Soil test, horticulture: 22

Program Examples:

- **Carter Co. Ag Day**, 83 participants
- Community garden **Van Buren**, 3 participants
- **Carter Co. Site visits:** 6 total, 9 participants

Direct Contact Topics: 14

- Managing a home orchard
- Disease (brown rot, fire blight, rust)
- Garden site evaluation
- Soil sampling and interpretation

Collaboration with External Partners

The Carter County Soil and Water District, Extension Master Gardeners, and others came together to host Ag Day. Extension was well representing having three separate demonstration tables at the event for youth.



Master Gardeners show students how to make bird feeders for Ag day

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 Aware event
- Mums fundraising sale

Extension Master Gardener Training: 2 sessions

- Spring, 1 participant
- Fall, 2 participants

Indirect & Virtual Reach

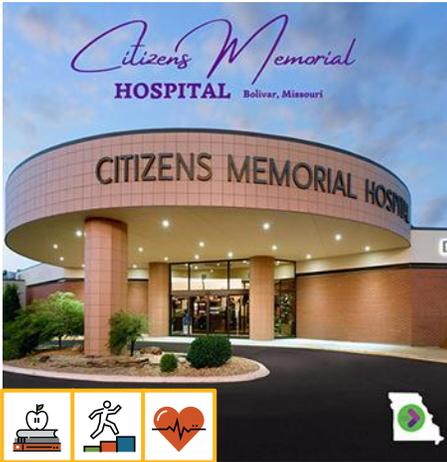
- Two radio interviews on Show Me Today reached approximately 60,000 listeners statewide.
- The Garden Hour virtual series drew 1488 attendees across 12 sessions through the year and delivered horticulture education.
- Sessions are available through live Zoom and posted on the [MU Extension Integrated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





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Business and Community



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.



Missourians from all walks of life celebrated the **2023 Missouri Good Neighbor Week** Sept. 28 to Oct. 4 by completing and reporting neighboring acts and nominating others as the most engaged neighbors in their counties.

In 2023, the goal was to document 15,000 acts of neighboring. That goal was surpassed with 19,752 Missourians being positively affected during MISSOURI GOOD NEIGHBOR WEEK.



Strategic Doing is a one-day workshop that guides community stakeholders through an inclusive, problem-solving approach to developing high-impact projects to address local development issues.

"I highly recommend this incredible program to any community looking for focus and direction."

Strategic Doing participant



The city of Risco, Mo., lacked retail options for food. Risco's Strategic Doing workshop and follow-up activities resulted in a GROCERY STORE OPENING in the community.



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Health
& Well-Being



Workforce Development Education

At Van Buren High School

Business and Community Workforce Development



Jennifer Williams attends the VBHS Career Fair. Students complete a personality assessment based on the MBTI to learn more about themselves and the types of careers they're well-suited for.

Jennifer and Cara Carswell also spent three days at Van Buren High School with 87 students in their JAG program teaching about how personality awareness can aid in choosing a career.



In these two photos, students engage in an activity to demonstrate how more choice leads to higher satisfaction.



Students brainstorming career possibilities.

Students completing their personality assessments based on the Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator test.



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.
- Using USDA grant funds, MU Extension partnered with FosterAdopt Connect in Poplar Bluff who serves multiple counties throughout southeast MO to offer a local turkey giveaway to clients. Participants picked up a local whole smoked turkey on November 21, 2025. A total of 113 turkeys were distributed and were valued at almost \$4,000.



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



Carter County

Health and Human Science

Profiles and stories

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, 3114 direct and indirect contacts were reached in Carter 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.

3,114 participants
(both youth and adult)
received education in
Carter County in 2025.



A young girl holds a healthy snack she prepared during the 2025 Current River Food Truck Festival.



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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.



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.



Agricultural Growth & Stewardship



Economic Opportunity



Educational Access & Excellence



Health & Well-Being