



UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI EXTENSION

Cass County 2025 Annual Report

201 West Wall Street
Harrisonville, MO 64701
816-380-8460
cassco@missouri.edu

**SERVE MISSOURI.
DELIVER MIZZOU.**

M Extension
University of Missouri

an equal opportunity/ADA institution

**VICE CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE**

108 Whitten Hall

Columbia, MO 65211

PHONE 573-882-2394

EMAIL: cchiggins@missouri.edu

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 sunsetting 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



David Hoffman
Field Specialist in Livestock



Kyleigh Brown
Field Specialist in Human Development and Family Science



Dalaney Couch
4-H Youth Program Associate



Ellen Bloomer-Thornton
Nutrition Program Associate



Jill Parks
Administrative Assistant



Mikayla Neil
Extension & Engagement Specialist

Council Members

OFFICERS

Aaron Miller, Chairman, *Pleasant Hill*
Jim McDonnell, Vice-chairman, *Archie*
Glenda Gash, Secretary, *Harrisonville*
Scott Holtwick, Treasurer, *Garden City*

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Emily Cassil-Harris, *Freeman*
Kathee Glodowski, *Peculiar*
Kathy Lambertz, *Harrisonville*
Charla Martin, *Drexel*
Clayton Ogle, *Archie*
Scott White, *Belton*

APPOINTED

Austin Moreland, *Farm Bureau*
John Vic Grice, *City of Raymore*
Patte Klaus-Schreihofe, *City of Belton*
Mike Moreland, *County Commissioner*

County Executives

Bob Huston
Presiding Commissioner

Mike Moreland
Associate Commissioner District 1

Jeff Fletcher
Associate Commissioner District 2

BUDGET AND MORE

Appropriations Budget

Income

County Appropriations	91,800
Total Income	91,800

Expenses

Salaries/Benefits	76,200
Travel	6,000
Office Supplies/Svcs.	9,000
Copier	600
Total Expenses	91,800

Cass County Partners

Belton School District
Belton Senior Center
Bright Futures Harrisonville
Cass County Farm Bureau
Cass County Health Department
Cass County Public Library System
Cass County Master Gardeners
Cass County Soil & Water Conservation District
East Lynne School District
FCS Financial
Harrisonville Chamber of Commerce
Harrisonville Community Center
Harrisonville Kiwanis
Harrisonville Parks & Recreation
Harrisonville School District
Hawthorn Bank
Heart-N-Hand Food Pantry
Pleasant Hill School District
Raymore-Peculiar School District
Sherwood School District
West Central Missouri Community Action Agency

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



Local support

Did you know you can donate directly to Cass 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 Cass County Community Impact Report

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

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





MU EXTENSION **Serves MISSOURI and Delivers MIZZOU**
through credible statewide programs

Missouri 4-H for ages 8 – 18



From the beautiful scenery of Midwest Missouri to the fun conversations with fellow train riders and friends, a trip across the state is bound to make memories! Aboard the Amtrak River Runner, three train cars full of 4-H members traveled to Jefferson City to join nearly 1,000 4-H'ers for Missouri's **4-H Day at the Capitol**. Meeting with state officials and learning the processes and history of the Missouri government, a sea of green shirts filled the Capitol building, engaging in civic awareness, leadership, and service thanks in part to Amtrak! The train allowed a huge amount of youth to make the epic journey across rural Missouri to the state capitol and join their peers in highlighting how the 4-H program - the largest youth organization in the US -has positively impacted their lives and helped them develop and pursue their own future goals.

This opportunity was made extra special as 4-H members from Bates, Cass, Cooper, Henry, Johnson, and Pettis counties joined up on their trek east to Jefferson City, getting to meet other Missouri 4-H members and to learn more about their neighboring communities. Cass County had 32 youth and adults participate. Amtrak staff members were especially friendly and helpful, sharing their experiences and exhibiting the incredible technology and presence of a modern passenger railway in the Midwest. Wonder and excitement filled all of the passenger cars as 4-H members made new friends, discovered new places, and shared their own 4-H stories with other youth and organizations, curious passengers, and state legislators and officials.



“ “I am so excited to pass along my love for 4-H and camping to the next generation of campers. As those senior counselors retire, I know that it is up to me to make sure the next group of camp counselors are as good as the ones I had as a camper. I get to be a part of that tradition, and I am so thankful for that opportunity. Camp has taught me to not take for granted the time I have with my 4-H friends.” **”**

4-H camp is a very important part of the 4-H program. Twenty Cass County youth and six counselors participated in an overnight camp experience with youth from five other neighboring counties. 4-H Camp theme was “Surfing into Camp Bobwhite”. The 4-H'ers participated in opening and closing ceremonies, community service project, created volcanos, scavenger hunt, ultimate frisbee, gaga-gaga ball, soccer, beach volleyball, boat races, corn hole, skits, water games, swimming, song and dance, flag raising/lowering, Hulu dancers, and campfire.

Legend



Agricultural Growth & Stewardship



Economic Opportunity



Educational Access & Excellence

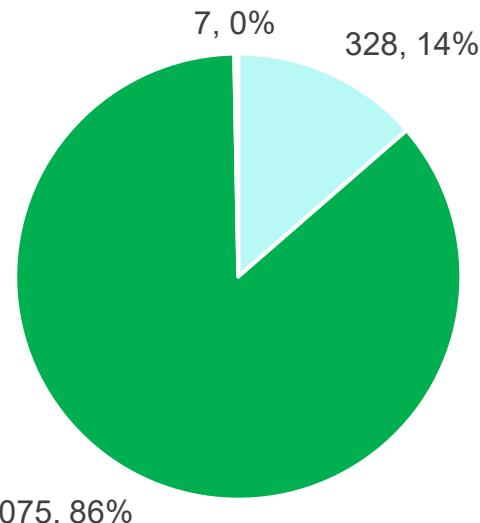


Health & Well-Being

Local Impact

4-H programs are grounded in the belief that youth learn best by doing. Through hands-on projects in areas like science, health, agriculture, and civic engagement in a positive environment, youth receive guidance from adult mentors and are encouraged to take on proactive leadership roles. Youth have the opportunity to concentrate on one focus area, or they can try a variety of programs throughout their 4-H experience.

4-H Membership



■ Community Club ■ School Enrichment ■ Independent Study

2024-25 Totals

Membership:
2,411 youth

Volunteers:
136

Estimated value of
volunteer time
invested:
Almost \$475,000

Volunteers

4-H members are supported by 136 youth and adult volunteers. Time valued at almost \$475,000. Volunteers are the core of the 4-H Program. They help to create, support, and deliver educational programs and experiences. Missouri 4-H volunteers report contributing an average of 100 hours per year to the program. Valuing their time at \$34.79 per hour (Independent Sector, 2025), the contribution of Cass County 4-H volunteers was worth almost $\frac{1}{2}$ million dollars in 2025. More importantly, these individuals serve as role models and mentors for youth.

Reference

Independent Sector (2025). Independent sector releases new value of volunteer time of \$34.79 per hour.



Profiles and Stories



The last week of May is **Missouri 4-H Week** and Cass County had thirteen youth attend Teen Conference and thirteen attend State 4-H Congress. They learned spent time on the MU Campus and discovered who they are as leaders. Youth were able to connect with college departments and live in the dorms. Two Cass County youth were elected to the State 4-H Council Board of Directors!

One Cass County 4-H members was selected to represent the state at the **National 4-H**

Congress, a premier leadership conference held Nov. 28-Dec. 2 in Atlanta. The member joined more than 700 youths from over 40 states for a week of leadership development, as well as an evening of culture at the Atlanta History Center and a morning community service.

National 4-H Congress offers Missouri youths the chance to connect with peers from across the country while strengthening skills they bring back to their local clubs and communities, said Megan Kershner, state 4-H leadership and civic engagement educator for University of Missouri Extension.



The **Cass County 4-H Council** is made up of seven youth who are responsible for directing the County 4-H program. They utilize their communication and organizational skills to create a successful 4-H program. 4-H is an innovator in developing youth leadership and decision-making skills to prepare young people for the future. Every year our Council along with committee members hosts several county wide events by utilizing positive youth adult partnerships.



COURAGE TO GROW
HEART TO SERVE
NATIONAL 4-H CONGRESS



Profiles and Stories

Eating from the Garden is a gardening program for second to fifth-grade kids. Gardening allows students to become part of an outdoor classroom, develop life skills and improve their health. Kids plant and harvest produce, sample fruits and vegetables, and participate in interactive nutrition and food safety activities. This year we, Nutrition Program Associate, Ellen Bloomer-Thornton, and Youth Program Associate, Dalaney Couch, partnered with Master Gardener, Reem Sanders, to teach gardening skills to Wal Center for their community project.



4-H Shooting Sports is a youth development educational program. It uses the skills and disciplines of shooting to assist young people and their leaders in obtaining knowledge and developing skills. Development of skills within the discipline of shooting and "life skills" is implicit in the program curriculum and explicitly stated for volunteers. It appeals to young people and volunteers from a wide range of urban and rural backgrounds. 4-H Shooting Sports promotes positive youth-adult interaction and peer leadership. Cass County has 116 members who participate in Shooting Sports.



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



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.



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.

"A lot of veterans come right out of the service and may feel disconnected and may be struggling with finding job opportunities. The Heroes to Hives program offers a diversion as well as opportunities."

Eric Work, Heroes to Hives participant

Heroes to Hives offers free professional training in beekeeping to veterans, promoting financial and personal wellness through community development. Missouri's Heroes to Hives group has trained more than 1,200 veterans since 2021. It is the nation's largest agriculture training program for U.S. military service members.



Legend



Agricultural Growth & Stewardship



Economic Opportunity



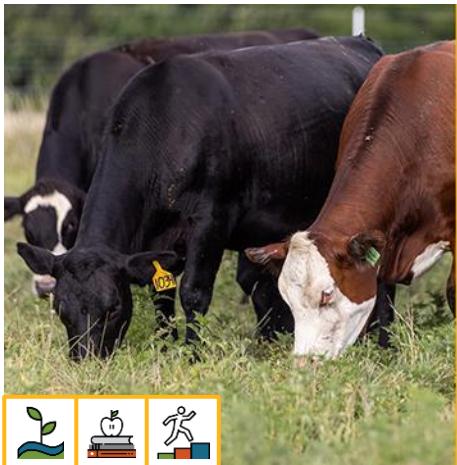
Educational Access & Excellence



Health & Well-Being

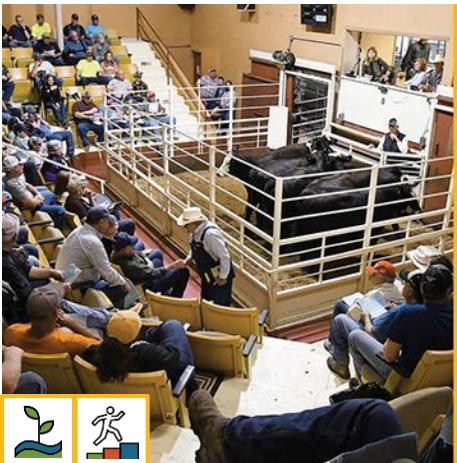


MU Extension **Serves MISSOURI and Delivers MIZZOU**
through credible statewide programs
Agriculture and Environment



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 Show-Me-Select Replacement Heifer Program strives to enhance beef herd reproductive efficiency, boost farm income and establish dependable sources of quality replacement cows in Missouri. The program brings in the power of animal genomics through an enhanced DNA-option, Show-Me-PLUS.



Since its inception more than 900 FARMS have enrolled, with an estimated statewide impact of \$200 MILLION.



The Agricultural Business and Policy (ABP) program drives the growth of Missouri's agriculture economy by equipping farmers, ranchers, landowners and agribusinesses with the knowledge and tools to make sound farm management decisions. ABP provides interactive programming and tailored resources such as enterprise budgets and farm accounting tools and valuable executive education through its annual Agricultural Lenders School and seminars. These programs deliver key insights, market outlooks, policy updates and practical tools to help lenders and their clientele navigate volatile farm economies. ABP conducts unbiased comprehensive surveys on farmland values, custom farming rates and cash rental rates. These surveys for farm operators, ag lenders, government agencies and industry stakeholders provide valuable insights into trends and indicators of farm financial health.

Legend



Agricultural Growth & Stewardship



Economic Opportunity



Educational Access & Excellence



Health & Well-Being

Cass County

Agriculture and Environment

Local Impact

West Central Missouri Show-Me-Select Heifer Program:



Producers used proven heifer development methods and management practices to minimize calving difficulty and increase cow longevity. In 2025, producers sold 213 head of spring-calving heifers and fall-calving pairs for an average of \$4365 per head, grossing \$930,000.00 in direct sales. The west central program offered, for the first time in program history, Show-Me-Select heifers with 30-60 day calves at side. The 30 pairs averaged \$4535 per head. In 27 years, the SMS program has sold 6501 head of bred heifers for \$11.7 million in west central Missouri beef producers.

Agricultural Program Participation:

Producers, landowners and home homeowners received assistance via:

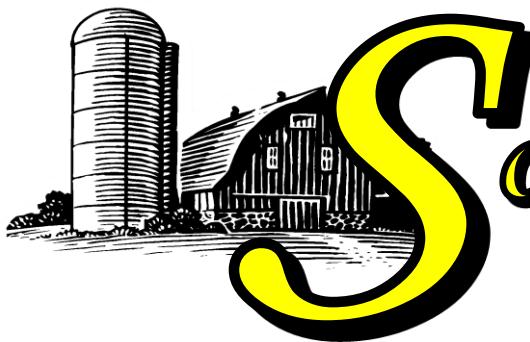
- Show-Me-Select Heifer Program
- Cattle Reproductive and Genetic Management
- Beef Carcass Evaluation
- Forage Management and Quality
- Small Ruminants
- Horses
- Integrated Crop Management
- Ag Business Management
- Private Pesticide Applicator Training
- Home Horticulture
- Farm/Agricultural Services: soil testing, forage testing, water analysis, etc.



Cass County

Agriculture and Environment

Local Impact



Fifty-three (53) producers and landowners attend the 101^s Annual Cass County Soils and Crops Conference. The attendees gained valuable information from experts on the endangered species act and pesticide use (Kaitlin Flick Dinsmore with K.M. Flick Consulting), animal health and identification update (Dr. David Hertzog, DVM with MO Department of Agriculture), monitoring crop inputs to maintain profitability (Jin Crawford with MU Extension) and market outlook for 2025 (Wesley Tucker with MU Extension). The conference is one of the longest, consecutively held program with MU Extension. It originally started as the Clover and Prosperity Conference in 1925.



101st Annual Cass County Soils and Crops CONFERENCE



Program was co-sponsored by:

- Cass County Extension
- Hawthorn Bank
- Cass County Farm Bureau
- West Central Auction Company

Cass County

Agriculture and Environment

Profiles and stories



2025 Conservation Educator of the Year – Missouri Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts

For dedication and service to Conservation Education in Missouri, Amie Breshears was honored as the “2025 Conservation Educator of the Year” at the Missouri Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts’ (MASWCD) Annual Conference at Tan-Tar-A on December 1, 2025.

She is especially grateful to the Benton County Soil & Water Conservation District, Benton County Extension Council, MU Extension, and the MASWCD for this recognition and honor.

Value of Agriculture to Cass County

- According to 2022 Census of Agriculture, production agriculture has an economic impact of \$140,298,000.00 in crops (76%) and livestock (24%) marketed annually.
- Cass County ranks 41st (of 114) in state of Missouri for market value of ag products sold, 24th for crops, 55th for livestock.
- 1,314 farms in Cass County
- 301,581 acres of land in farms
- Average 230 acres/farm)
- 95% of all farms are family owned.
- 2,244 producers (62% male, 38% female).
- Producers age:
 35 – 64: 55%
 65 & older: 38%

Livestock	Numbers
Cattle	35,225
Hogs	30,164
Horses	1,575
Goats/Sheep	1,495





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

MU Career Accelerator Program

Whether you're an employer looking to strengthen your workforce or an individual looking to advance in your career, MU's Career Accelerator offers a variety of courses, training events, and certificates to meet your needs. Utilizing the University of Missouri's researchers and instructors, along with various partnerships across multiple industries, the MU Career Accelerator is a valuable resource for upskilling and reskilling America's workforce. We keep Missouri working and we keep Missouri competing.

- 234 individuals participated in MU Career Accelerator events/trainings
- Hosted 7 in-person leadership trainings and workshops in Boone County

Trainings and leadership institutes are half-day or full-day workshops. Attendees gain new skills, tactics, and/or knowledge that can be applied directly back to their profession. When the MU Career Accelerator hosts a workshop, we partner with fellow University of Missouri faculty and on-campus departments to deliver accurate and cutting edge information that directly benefits that specific workforce.

- Partnered with 3 different on-campus schools/departments to deliver content

Additionally, we collaborated with the Missouri Training Institute (a unit housed within Extension) to offer 2 in-person training events.

This fall, we hosted 6 workforce summits across the state of Missouri and 1 virtual summit. The Workforce Summits offered insights and resources to various sectors of Missouri's employers (public, private and nonprofit) and explained how MU Extension resources can be leveraged for local economic and workforce development.

- Engaged with 263 individuals from across Missouri



Legend



Agricultural Growth & Stewardship



Economic Opportunity



Educational Access & Excellence



Health & Well-Being



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



Building Strong Families

Studies show that people with strong family bonds tend to have lower stress levels. Building Strong Families helps families deal with disagreements, manage stress and show their love for one another.



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 addition 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

Cass County

Health and Human Science

Profiles and stories



A Matter of Balance

A Matter of Balance empowers participants to evaluate their risk of falling, improve their balance, and increase their confidence. **Human Development and Family Science Specialist Kyleigh Brown** and **Nutrition and Health Specialist Dr. Sara Bridgewater** partnered with the Belton Senior Center to offer this program to **20 older adults**.



Focus on Kids

Focus on Kids is a co-parenting education for Parents raising children in two separate households. Co-parenting education is often required by family court. **Human Development and Family Science Specialist Kyleigh Brown** provided 12 classes in Cass County reaching **55 participants**. 80% of participants reported that because of this class they were more likely to make an effort to work with their co-parent.



Show Me Nutrition

Show Me Nutrition is a nutrition curriculum that teaches youths from preschool through junior high several important health themes, such as nutrition, food safety, and physical activity. It supports both the State of Missouri's Show-Me educational standards for health and physical education and Missouri's School Wellness Policy. **Nutrition Program Associate Ellen Bloomer-Thornton** partnered with several schools **reaching over 600 Cass County students**.

Cass County

Health and Human Sciences

Local Impact

Indirect Education

In 2025 the Health and Human Sciences team, made up of Ellen Bloomer-Thornton, Nutrition Program Associate; Dr. Sara Bridgewater, Nutrition and Health Specialist; and Kyleigh Brown, Human Development and Family Science Specialist, had over 6,300 indirect contacts in Cass County. Indirect education occurs at resource fairs, through social media, and by providing hard copy materials to individuals and organizations.

Alzheimer's Disease Prevention and Caregiving

MU Extension partnered with the Alzheimer's Association to provide programming in Cass County. Human Development and Family Science Specialist Kyleigh Brown partnered with the Cass County Public Library-Harrisonville Branch to offer a three-session series to community members. For an additional program at Cass Regional Medical Center, Kyleigh Brown worked in collaboration with Nutrition and Health Specialist Dr. Sara Bridgewater to provide Alzheimer's prevention education to a diabetes support group. In total, 27 community members were reached. 100% of survey respondents reported the program increased their knowledge.



Cass County

Health and Human Science

Local impact

Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Program

Ellen Bloomer-Thornton, Nutrition Program Associate and Dr. Sara Bridgewater, Nutrition and Health Field Specialist hosted enrollment events and bag deliveries around Cass County for the Missouri Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Program. The MoSFMNP provides benefits to low-income seniors (60 years of age or older) residing in one of 47 Missouri counties. Eligible seniors choose to receive \$50 in benefits to spend at local farmers markets or a one-time \$50 bag of produce annually. A total of 104 seniors from Cass County enrolled in the 2025 program.



Community Gardens



MU Extension supports up to 900 community gardens per year across the state through infrastructure development or Educational programs. These gardens help reduce food insecurity and expand access to fresh produce. MU Extension also supplied seeds and other essential items such hand tools, hoses, portable Garden sheds, soil and water systems. Ellen Bloomer-Thornton, Nutrition Program Associate assisted 3 Cass County Community Gardens. Much of the support was made possible through Community Development Block Grants from the Missouri Department of Social Services.

Combined SNAP-Ed and EFNEP Public Value Statement 2025

Missouri's **Family Nutrition Education Program** oversees two programs: the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (**SNAP-Ed**) and Expanded Family Nutrition Education Program (**EFNEP**). Together, these programs brought over \$13 million in federal funds to Missouri in 2025. MU Extension's Family Nutrition Education Program engaged with 970,000+ Missourians with low income. Over 74,000 Missourians participated in nutrition education classes. **8,189 direct and indirect contacts were made in Cass County.**

Participants in SNAP-Ed and EFNEP learn the importance of making healthier meals and snack choices, eating breakfast more often, are more willing to try new foods, increase their physical activity, and make healthier food choices. Those who practice healthy eating and are physically active are **more likely to contribute to a healthy labor force and enjoy a high quality of life** throughout the lifespan.

This vital programming effort **reduces healthcare costs** over the participant's lifetime and **saves taxpayer money** in reduced public healthcare benefits and insurance premiums.