



UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI EXTENSION

Christian County 2025

Annual Report

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**SERVE MISSOURI.
DELIVER MIZZOU.®**

U 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,



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

WHO WE ARE

Faculty and Staff



Kyle Whittaker
Extension Engagement Specialist



Jenni Nevatt
Nutrition and Health Education



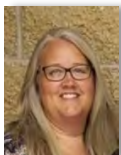
Jackie Basham
Nutrition Program Associate



Kenlyn Pence
Nutrition Program Associate



Michelle Rogers
4-H Youth Program Associate



Candice Cover
Administrative Assistant

Council Members

Robert Klug, Chairman
Andrew Mills, Vice-chairman
Patsy Briggs, Secretary
Dennis Baker, Treasurer
Sara Anderson
Shelby Austin
Charles Cameron
Allison Day
Brian Day
Walt Martens
Lynn Morris
Arianna Russell
Jason Stutesmun
Madyson Tilley



County executives

Lynn Morris, Presiding Commissioner
Bradley Jackson, Eastern District
Johnny Williams, Wester District

BUDGET AND MORE

Appropriations budget

Income	
County Appropriations	82,449.99
Other Income	181
Total Income	82,630.99
Expenses	
Events and Training	74.60
Salaries/Benefits	52,743.59
Payroll Expenses	4,100.26
Travel	2,921.54
Postage	86.30
Telephone	2,282.23
Advertising	405
Copier	3,468.25
Office Supplies/Service	1,157.31
Rent/Lease Space	15,600
Utilities	3,342.51
Insurance	2,067
Extension Council Election	95.88
Total Expenses	88,344.47
Net Balance	-5,713.48

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

Local support

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

This report offers a detailed overview of how MU Extension positively impacts Christian 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

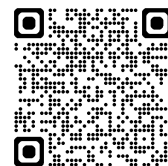
Grand Challenges

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 Christian 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 Christian County is addressing these challenges. Each section breaks down county-specific statistics compared to state averages.

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



157

Soil samples submitted to the MU
Soil and Plant testing laboratory

20

Forage samples submitted to Custom Labs for analysis

12

Canner Gauges tested in Extension office

24

Johnson Grass Nitrate Testing done in Extension office

- ♦ Soil Testing
- ♦ Canner Gauge Testing
- ♦ Hay Testing
- ♦ Plant/Insect Identification
- ♦ Plant Disease Diagnosis
- ♦ Small Business Development Assistance: Transforming Missouri Businesses— MU Extension business specialists provide assistance to those wanting to start, maintain or expand a business through the Missouri Small Business Development Centers and via Missouri Procurement Technical Assistance Centers.
- ♦ Distance Education Test Proctoring—MU Extension proctors tests for students enrolled in Mizzou Online courses.
- ♦ Publications—MU Extension has a variety of publications available. Prices vary.

To learn more about any of our programs or services visit our website: <https://extension.missouri.edu/counties/christian>



<https://www.facebook.com/Christian-County-MU-Extension-104129067790327/>



Extension Engagement Specialist
Christian County

Christian County

Local Impact

Engagement Activities in Christian County



In November, the Christian County MU Extension Council hosted a Council Mixer. The event included representatives from Master Gardeners and 4-H. The evening included reports from these different groups and MU Extension faculty and staff. The mixer was an effective way for everyone to understand what each group is doing and how we can collaborate more effectively to provide more positive impact for Christian County residents. Information learned at the event will be used to create a county level action plan for 2026.





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

Missouri 4-H for Ages 8 – 18



What is 4-H?

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

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



Missouri 4-H Natural Resources programs engage youth in hands-on learning across climate science, environmental sustainability, renewable energy, sportfishing, and wildlife conservation. Programs like the **4-H Sportfishing Contest** and **Sportfishing SLAM** give young people practical experience while building teamwork, problem-solving skills, and a love of the outdoors.

The **4-H Shooting Sports** program teaches marksmanship, safe firearm use, hunting, and archery principles, demonstrating how 4-H encourages holistic youth development and responsible citizenship. Supported by caring adult leaders, these programs help youth cultivate life skills, self-worth, and conservation ethics while exploring the natural world around them.



4-H brings hands-on learning directly into schools through in-school and afterschool programs that extend classroom lessons. **Teachers, 4-H professionals, and volunteers** guide students through 4-H projects in areas such as science, agriculture, health, and leadership, helping youth connect learning to the real world.

Programs like **Show Me Embryology** give students a front-row seat to science in action as they watch chicks hatch and explore the life cycle of a chicken. These experiences help students grow curiosity, confidence, and critical thinking skills, preparing them to be Beyond Ready for whatever comes next.

Legend



Agricultural Growth
& Stewardship



Economic
Opportunity



Educational
Access &
Excellence



Health
& Well-Being

Christian County

Missouri 4-H

Local Impact

Twelve 4-H members, volunteers, and parents from Christian County joined nearly 900 Missouri 4-H participants at the State Capitol for 4-H Day.



One Nixa Bike Night — over 30 helmets were given away.



Poultry Chain participant picking out her chicks. The pullets are sold at auction at the Christian County Livestock Show.



Egg dissection during Embryology class



Poultry Chain participant learning how to show their chicken.



4-H Field trip to Dogwood Canyon



Christian County Sheep & Goat workshop

Deadeyes 4-H Club 2024–2025 Year in Review

Missouri 4-H

The 2024—2025 4-H year was a busy and successful one for the Deadeyes 4-H Club! From county practices and regional shooting sports camp to regional, state, and even national competitions, 23 youth—ages 8 to 18—participated in one or more of these activities.

The 4-H Shooting Sports program is the only 4-H program that requires volunteers to complete a certification training process. This year, the Deadeyes were fortunate to have seven certified volunteers, which allowed them to offer a wide variety of disciplines: Shooting Sports Safety, Air Rifle, Air Pistol, Archery, .22 Rifle, .22 Pistol, Shotgun, Muzzleloader, and Hunting & Outdoor Skills.

For many participants, this was their first time ever taking part in a shooting sports activity. Because 4-H is a *positive youth development* program, shooting sports serve as a tool for building important life skills such as critical thinking, planning and organization, stress management, self-motivation, teamwork, and self-esteem. The Hunting and Outdoor Skills discipline also teaches valuable skills including orienteering, conservation and wildlife identification, and first aid.

Seven youth participated in regional competitions. Reggie Burke, Wade Washburn, Michael Halley, and Gabriel Halley all competed at the Polk County 4-H Shooting Sports Invitational. It was the first competition for all of them, and they performed very well: **Michael Halley** placed 4th in Intermediate .22 Rifle (Open Sights); **Gabriel Halley** placed 2nd in Intermediate Air Rifle; **Reggie Burkhart** earned 1st in Junior Air Rifle and 10th in Junior Compound Archery. **Grace, Lucky, and Rocky Day** participated in the Cole County Invitational, where: **Grace Day** earned 1st in Senior Compound Archery; **Lucky Day** earned 3rd in Senior .22 Pistol; **Rocky Day** earned 3rd in Junior .22 Rifle.

Four youth went on to compete at the **State 4-H Shooting Sports Competition**, held over three weekends in September. **Delainey Guardiola-Ellis** won 2nd place in .22 Rifle (Aperture) 3-Position at 50 yards and 2nd in .22 Rifle (Aperture) 3-Position Standard; **Grace Day** placed 5th in Hunting and Outdoor Skills, followed closely by **Lucky Day** in 6th.; **Rocky Day** placed 2nd in Junior Hunting and Outdoor Skills, 8th in Archery 600 Junior Compound Release, and 2nd in Junior .22 Rifle (Open Sights). **Lucky Day** also earned 7th in Muzzleloader, 10th in .22 Pistol, and 4th in .22 Rifle (Aperture) 3-Position.

Additionally, three Deadeyes earned spots on the **Missouri State 4-H Shooting Sports Team**, representing the state at the **National 4-H Shooting Sports Championships** in Grand Island, Nebraska, in June. More than 700 youth from 44 states competed at Nationals. **Grace Day** competed on the Hunting and Outdoor Skills Team, which placed 2nd overall, while she placed 5th individually. **Lucky Day** competed on the Muzzleloader Team, helping them secure 3rd place overall. **Delainey Guardiola-Ellis** trained all year as an alternate on the .22 Rifle Team. Thanks to the combined efforts of all Missouri team members, **Missouri placed 2nd overall in the nation!**



Two Rivers 4-H Club 2025 End of Year Summary

Two Rivers has finished up a great year of 4-H activities. From community service and project meetings, to learning opportunities and fun events, the kids have come together and made friends, developed skills and had fun! Over spring break, our club led a county-wide event at Dogwood Canyon. We had a fun day that included a behind the scenes tour of the animal ambassador area, had time to explore the museum, tree house, and mill areas, and finished up the day with a tram tour to see the buffalo herd and sights throughout the park.

Our club also helped organize a county cake decorating project. Two teens (Grace Day from Two Rivers, and Sydney White from Clever Clovers) taught two beginning cake decorating classes. They had 19 kids attend their first class; interest was so strong, they put on another class six weeks later. As a result of what they taught, numerous youth entered cakes into the fair, and one of the kids even led a cake decorating demonstration of her own, teaching our whole club how to decorate a cupcake.

While some club meetings had kids doing demonstrations, at other club meetings we were able to bring in some great people from the community to help teach new skills. The Ozark Fire Department brought CPR dummies and AED machines and presented a hands-on family CPR class. Throughout the year we were also able to give back to the community through community service projects. We put together disaster response hygiene kits for Convoy of Hope. This summer we also worked with Sparta Community Gardens, helping to weed and harvest vegetables that are free for families in need.

Kids also had the chance to participate in other activities outside of our club. Many of them took part in the poultry chain where they raised, showed and sold hens. We also had kids learn about our state government during 4-H Day at the Capitol. During the summer several of our club members were able to attend summer camps. Two attended Camp Smokey, at Roaring River State Park. Another was able to the Shooting Sports camp at Camp Clover Point.

From fun events and activities, to learning important life skills and helping others, Two Rivers 4-H Club had a great 2025!



Teen-led cake decorating class



Showing hens at the livestock show



Weeding at Sparta Community Gardens



CPR Class



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Agriculture and Environment



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.



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 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.

Legend



Agricultural Growth
& Stewardship



Economic
Opportunity



Educational
Access &
Excellence



Health
& Well-Being

Christian County

Master Gardener Program

Local Impact

Number of Volunteers — 39
Number of Volunteer Hours — 2,706.76
Dollar Value of Volunteer Hours - \$94,168.18
Number of New Volunteers — 4
Number of Continuing Education Hours — 523
Number of Advanced Training Hours — 58
Pounds of Produce Donated — 218
Value of Pounds of Produce Donated - \$420.74
Number of Chapter-led Education Events — 24
Number of Participants in Education Events — 134
Number of Hotline Questions Answered — 20
Number of Hotline Volunteer Hours - 465
Social Media Analytics — Facebook/Instagram
Followers — 2,175, Views — 367,966
Website visits — 13,747

Christian County Master Gardeners County Projects

- ❖ Nixa: Gardens at Woodfield, Rotary Park display garden, XCentre display planter
- ❖ Ozark: Ozark Library branch display planters, Daffodil Boxes
- ❖ Sparta: Sparta Community Garden

Community Impact

- ❖ OTC Foundation scholarship - helping to support 2 students' pursuit in agriculture.
- ❖ Meet me in the Library sessions, 21 different educational talks in the 3 different branches.
- ❖ 3 Public seminars, Koi Pond gardening held at Carson's Nurseries, Spring Pruning held at Gardens at Woodfield and Bee Keeping and Pollinator planting held at the XCentre.
- ❖ Sparta Community Garden, CCMG maintains a seat on the board of directors and offer advice throughout the year.
- ❖ Nixa JR school greenhouse, worked with the greenhouse director and students harvesting hundreds of lettuce plants for donation to Least of These.
- ❖ Ozark Showcase event sponsored by Ozark Chamber of Commerce. CCMG offered house plants for sale and staffed an information table for questions.
- ❖ Invited by MU Extension to participate in a NPR radio spot on growing tomatoes and a KY3 The Place TV spot on succulents.
- ❖ CCMG annual plant sale was attended by over 400 people. Offered a wide variety of plants and staffed an information table for questions.
- ❖ The Ozark Craft Fair 3 day event with over 400 contacts from our information table.



Christian County

Master Gardener Program

Profiles and Stories



Plant Propagation class



Christian County Master Gardeners Annual Plant Sale



In June 2025, the Christian County Master Gardeners proudly accepted multiple prestigious awards at the Annual Missouri Extension Master Gardener Conference. The chapter was honored with the 2024 Medium Chapter of the Year Award and the 2024 Project of the Year Award, recognizing excellence in chapter activities and outstanding project achievements. Additionally, Patty Baker received the 2024 MG of the Year Award for her exceptional contributions. These accolades highlight the Christian County Master Gardeners continued dedication to professional growth and community impact.

Christian County

Agriculture and Environment

Local Impact

Christian County Livestock and Forage

Conference - There were 59 participants who attended the conference in March. Topics covered included “Bullet-Proofing Your Beef Operation” and “Drought-Resilient Farms”. In the survey at the end of the meeting, 100 percent of the participants ranked the program as either meeting or exceeding their expectations. Christian County farm producers are an economic generator for the local economy. This program addressed ways this sector in the county economy can remain viable.



41st Annual Southwest Missouri Spring Forage

Conference - There were around 375 farm producers who participated in the conference in Springfield in February. There were fourteen key presentations and a trade show. This is one of Missouri's largest gatherings of farmers and ranchers and is hosted by a committee made up of extension field specialists and professionals from Soil & Water Conservation Districts, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Missouri Department of Conservation.

Private Pesticide Applicator Training - There were 76 participants who attended trainings offered by Tim Schnakenberg. Trainings occurred in Cassville, Springfield, Ozark, Mt. Vernon, Ava and Hollister. This training has direct impact on environmental safety, human safety and the safety of the American food supply. Farmers are retrained every five years in order to maintain a private pesticide license to purchase and use Restricted-Use pesticides.

Farm Fest - Farm Fest is held each year at the Ozark Empire Fairgrounds in Springfield and is the largest gathering of the farm community in Southwest Missouri. MU Extension ag specialists staff a booth at this event throughout the entire weekend in October. Thousands of visitors streamed by the booth and hundreds stopped in to visit with regional specialists.

Noncertified Restricted-Use Pesticide (NRUP)

Applicator Training - There were 32 participants who attended NRUP trainings offered by Rusty Lee, Micah Doubledee and Tim Schnakenberg. Trainings occurred in Springfield, Nixa and Carthage. This newly required training certifies pesticide users to work under supervisors who have commercial licenses. This often applies to employees of pest control operators, farm chemical applicators, government workers and municipalities.



Christian County

Agriculture and Environment

Local Impact

Warm Season Grass Workshop - There were around 45 farm producers from many counties who participated in the warm season grass workshop at Mt. Vernon in February. With recent droughts, warm season grasses are growing in popularity and this workshop gave recommendations on species selection, establishment methods and management tactics. One respondent to the survey mentioned, "Very helpful. Completely new to this so I need to hear and re-hear. With each presentation, I learn more, or it sticks with me better."



Frost Seeding Legumes Workshop - There were 61 attendees that attended this workshop offered by Caleb O'Neal, Tim Schnakenberg, and Terry Halleran at Mt. Vernon in February. Christian County producers were a part of this program. This program thoroughly covered the practice of improving fescue pastures with frost-seeded legumes. Diversifying the cool-season forage base with legumes extends the grazing season of the land resource and creates higher quality forage when compared to cool-season grass monocultures alone. These legumes also fix nitrogen into the soil, which can increase the yield of the surrounding grasses as well, while also diluting the toxicity of species like K31 tall fescue. Increasing the yield and quality of forage of livestock operations, while also reducing the toxic effects of the cool-season grasses can result in increased carrying capacity, better animal performance, and greater net profitability.



Ozark Empire Fair Hay Contest - This year's contest had outstanding participation with 49 entries submitted (36% increase from the previous year) from ten counties. Several ag specialists traveled to 30 southern Missouri farms to collect samples of the entries. This was a great opportunity to help producers better educate themselves on hay quality. Counties represented this year included Greene, Lawrence, Christian, Stone, Newton, Howell, Ozark, Iron, Webster and Barry counties. The highest-testing entry and champion dry hay came from Glenn and Toni Obermann of Monett. It was a first cutting alfalfa hay entry that was harvested on May 15. It produced a 231 Relative Forage Quality (RFQ). The champion haylage was alfalfa entered by Maple Pass Farm of Billings. It's cutting date was June 1 and the RFQ was 212. The show has occurred since 1985. Tim Schnakenberg and Reagan Bluel served as Superintendents for this contest.



Christian County

Agriculture and Environment

Local Impact

Missouri Grazing Schools – A grazing school was held in September at Clever with 16 participants. These schools provide the most in-depth training on how to be successful with Management-intensive Grazing (MiG) practices. These three-day schools are unique to Missouri and have set a standard for teaching and demonstrating the newest grazing concepts. Other schools offered in 2025 occurred in Greene, Lawrence, Newton, Wright, Dade and Ozark counties. The schools allowed farmers to think differently about how they manage their pastures and have become a very effective program. There were over 150 livestock producers who attended the sessions from Southwest Missouri counties this year. Numerous presentations were offered along with on-farm field trips to evaluate pasture grazing systems.



Soybean Cyst Nematode Survey – A survey of soybean cyst nematodes in local soybean fields was conducted by researchers from the MU campus. Farms were identified in Barry, Lawrence, Newton, Stone and Christian Counties for this survey.

Insect Pest Monitoring – This is an ongoing effort by extension agronomists to monitor insect pest movement in Missouri. Counts from traps based in Christian and Barton Counties are recorded weekly on the MU IPM website and alerts are provided for farmers who sign up for the service. The service provides a heads-up for insect invasions in both crops and forages. Insects are monitored including fall armyworm, true armyworm, stinkbug, Japanese beetle, corn leafhopper and black cutworm. In addition, there was an extensive evaluation in Christian and Stone counties this year of soybean stinkbug levels. This was conducted by Dr Ivair Valmordia, state extension entomologist, on four farms.



Christian County

Agriculture and Environment

Local Impact

Applied Forage Research – Agronomists Josh Dunn and Tim Schnakenberg worked under the direction of Caleb O’Neal to conduct forage research at the Southwest Research, Extension and Education Center. At least two studies have developed including a replicated research trial evaluating various establishment methods for crabgrass and teff. Results were shared at the field day in September. Another study that was initiated in December evaluates the best time and practice for establishing Eastern gamagrass. Both dormant seeding and spring seeding is being evaluated. Also included is a biological seed treatment.



Agriculture Exhibit for Nixa Students— Tim Schnakenberg did a program with twelve pre-school students of Nixa schools in June regarding agriculture and how it impacts Missouri and the world.





Extension Engagement Specialist
Christian County

Christian County

Agriculture and Environment

Local Impact

Engagement Activities in Christian County



Extension Engagement Specialist – Kyle Whittaker conducted a Field to Freezer program in Christian County last January. Attendees learned how to score whitetail deer antlers using the Boone and Crockett scoring system. Participants also learned how to make summer sausage with their deer harvest. Each attendee went home with about 1 ½ lbs. of summer to cook at home.



In April Kyle Whittaker – Extension Engagement Specialist serving Christian County conducted a dry cured bacon workshop. The workshop was held at Nixa Junior High School. Attendees learned how to dry cure a fresh pork belly to make bacon.





Extension Engagement Specialist
Christian County

Christian County

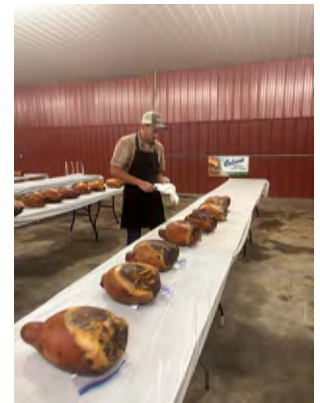
Agriculture and Environment

Regional Impact

Regional Engagement Activities



Area youth have success at the 2025 Gold Buckle Gala Ham Show. Kyle Whittaker Extension Engagement Specialist serves at the ham show superintendent and hosted several ham curing workshops throughout southwest Missouri. The Gold Buckle Gala is held at the Ozark Empire Fairgrounds in mid-July



Extension Engagement Specialist – Kyle Whittaker conducted a country cured ham judging clinic in conjunction the Gold Buckle Gala ham show. The clinic was for ag teachers and 4-H project leaders.



Kyle Whittaker – Extension Engagement Specialist and MU Extension's Value-Added-Meats Team provided a hands-on training to over 300 are FFA members at the Southwest Research Extension and Education Center Field Day in September.



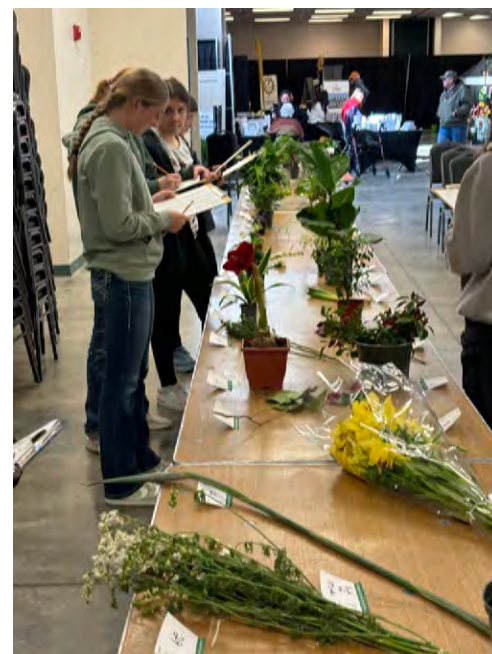
Extension Engagement Specialist
Christian County

Christian County

Agriculture and Environment

Regional Impact

Regional Engagement Activities



Extension Engagement Specialist Kyle Whittaker, MU Extension Workforce Development Specialist Amy Patillo, MU Extension Horticulture Specialist Kelly McGowen and Youth Program Associate Bailey Andrews conducted a Career Development Event workshops at the Springfield Lawn and Garden Show on February 21st. The workshops were held in conjunction with the lawn and garden show hosted by the Ozark Empire Fairgrounds. The team provided the workshops for FFA students preparing for district and state competitions. Three workshops were conducted in the areas of Floriculture, Nursery/Landscaping and Entomology.

The Floriculture Career Development Event includes identifying 60 plants from a list of 143 plants. A plant diagnosis and disorders practicum, greenhouse and floral item identification practicum and a written exam.

The Nursery/Landscaping Career Development Event includes 50 plants specimens from a list of 91 shade trees, flowering trees, perennials, evergreen shrubs, vines and ground covers, turf and flowering shrubs. The event also includes a plant disorder and diagnosis practicum, a landscape design practicum and a written exam.

The Entomology Career Development Event includes identifying 40 insect specimens from a list of 114. The event also includes an insect/plant diagnosis practicum, pesticide formulation problem and a written exam.



Extension Engagement Specialist
Christian County

Christian County

Agriculture and Environment

Regional Impact

Regional Engagement Activities



Extension Engagement Specialist – Kyle Whittaker conducted the Southwest District Poultry and Meats Evaluation Career Development Events (CDE) held on the campus of Missouri State University. The meats CDE involved 27 teams from schools throughout southwest Missouri and the poultry CDE involved 30 teams, 204 students participated in the events. The District CDE was held April 3rd and 4th and is a qualifying event for FFA teams competing for the state FFA CDE.

Christian County

Agriculture and Environment

Agriculture Business & Policy



The 2025 Spring Forage Conference provided **47 Christian County producers** with research-based training on soil fertility, forage species, grazing systems, native grasses, and managing fescue toxicosis across beef, dairy, and small-ruminant operations. Participants gained practical, production-focused strategies to improve pasture resilience and livestock performance.



Fill Your Freezer program equipped **7 Christian County participants** with research-based guidance on purchasing bulk meat from local producers, including understanding cuts, yields, pricing, processor options, and freezer space needs. Participants gained practical knowledge to make confident, cost-effective decisions when buying freezer meat.

The SW-REEC Poultry Processing Demonstration

trained **49 Christian County students and teachers** in small-scale poultry processing, including safe handling, sanitation, workflow design, and regulatory compliance. Participants gained skills to support on-farm or direct-market poultry enterprises.



Agriculture and Environment



In September I traveled to Clever to serve as a co-instructor at the **Christian County Grazing School**, a partnership between Extension, SWCD, and MFGC. I taught cattle nutrition from a forage standpoint to approximately 12 participants.

In October, MU Extension hosted a booth at **FarmFest** - one the biggest farm and trade shows in the Ozarks. They estimated over 60,000 attendees were present the first weekend of October at the Ozark Empire Fairgrounds. This outreach effort was possible thanks to a council donation.



In November, the Christian County council hosted **Desserts & Dialogue** where multiple facets of Extension presented to the invited public on what their role is and their recent, as well as upcoming, activities. I reported on my work in the small dairy herd space to approximately thirty individuals in attendance.



Christian County

Agriculture and Environment

Profiles and stories



The 100th Annual Lawrence Soils & Crops Conference took place January 14 at the Southwest Research Station. The program was largely drought focused and was attended by 94 participants. Attendees learned about forage, soil, and weed management as it pertains to drought resilience for cattle operations.



The Monnett Beef Conference took place March 11 at the Monett Armory and hosted 32 participants. This program largely focused on cattle nutrition, including presentations on forage-based cow nutrition and finishing cull heifers, but also included a beef industry economic outlook for 2025.

Livestock Specialists partnered with 7 veterinarians in Southwest Missouri to host the Bull Soundness Exam Days on several days in the spring and fall at vet clinics across the region. Cattlemen brought in their bulls to be evaluated for breeding soundness by having veterinarians and livestock specialists observe confirmation, body condition, and semen quality, and were educated on bull management and selection. There were 43 farms that participated and 152 bulls that were evaluated.





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

Business and Community



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.



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

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

2022 NLA graduate

AMERICA'S SBDC MISSOURI CLIENT HIGHLIGHT



The **Missouri Small Business Development Centers (SBDC)** provide professional training and customized one-on-one counseling to small business across the state. Working with the Missouri SBDC helps business owners make confident decisions.

FY2020-2022, Missouri SBDC ASSISTED 878 STARTUPS and helped Missouri small businesses earn more than \$440 Million.

LOGS
— OF —
GLORY

Legend



Agricultural Growth
& Stewardship



Economic
Opportunity



Educational
Access &
Excellence



Health
& Well-Being

Business and Community

Profiles and Stories



Recovery Friendly Workplace Designation 2025
Arvest Bank Speakers and Partner sponsor

Recovery Friendly Workplace Employer Designation Training

In addition to presenting to approximately 50 leaders at the Ozark Region Nexus statewide meeting, the Recovery Friendly Workplace Employer Designation Training engaged 28 employers and community partners who gained practical tools to support employees in recovery, reduce stigma, and strengthen workplace culture. Participants reported increased understanding of recovery-informed practices and greater confidence in implementing policies that promote safety, stability, and employee retention across their organizations.

Second-chance hiring Engagements

Across three speaking engagements with Rotary clubs and regional Recovery Coalitions, *Reimagining Your Workforce: Breaking Barriers Together* reached 167 community leaders, employers, and service partners. These presentations strengthened understanding of second-chance hiring, highlighted effective workforce strategies, and equipped attendees with practical tools to support justice-involved individuals in reentering employment. Participants reported increased awareness, stronger cross-sector collaboration, and a renewed commitment to expanding opportunity for workers across southwest Missouri.



Second-Chance Hiring Speaking Engagements

Second-chance hiring and Recovery Friendly Workplace strategies expand talent pipelines, improve retention, and strengthen community stability. MU Extension plays a critical intermediary role by connecting employers with trusted partners, providing evidence-based training, and coordinating cross-sector efforts that help justice-involved and recovery-involved individuals successfully return to work.

Christian County

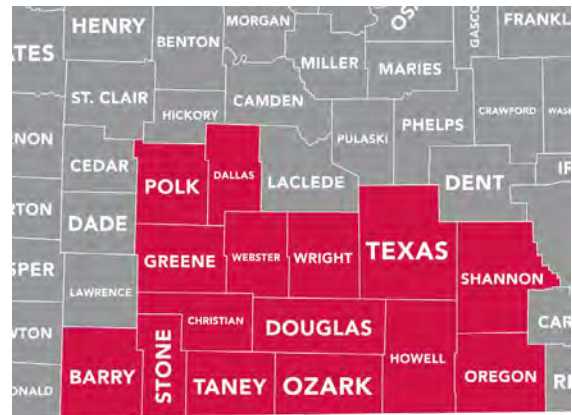
Missouri Small Business Development Center (SBDC)

The Missouri SBDC at Missouri State University (MSU) provided support to Christian County entrepreneurs and small business owners through 1:1 assistance and training.



Over the course of 2025, our office met with clients to discuss a wide range of topics including:

- Starting a business
- Business financing
- Business expansion and relocation
- Financial planning & cash flow management
- Marketing strategy
- Course projects with MSU students
- Purchasing a business
- International expansion opportunities
- Technology commercialization



The Missouri SBDC at Missouri State University serves 15 counties in southwest Missouri (highlighted).

Learn more about our latest programs and training

sbdc@missouristate.edu

417-837-2617

sbdc.missouristate.edu

REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

\$97,043,687

Increase in sales for client companies through the assistance of the SBDC

\$114,320,774

Government contracts secured through the assistance of APEX (formerly MO PTAC)

\$36,666,174

Capitalization secured through the assistance of the SBDC

KEY OUTCOMES IN CHRISTIAN COUNTY

94 Business owners in the County received multiple 1:1 consulting sessions regarding their small businesses.

\$566k Approved capital funding

\$2.9 million Increase in sales

4 New businesses started

999 Attendees from Christian County joined our business and professional development training programs.

Extension Tax School

University of Missouri Extension coordinated and offered tax education through one summer and three fall tax schools. The summer school was in person and live online. Fall schools were in Columbia and Springfield and an online school. The schools were designed for those who prepare taxes including enrolled agents, tax preparers, CPAs, individuals, and attorneys.

The training included updates on legislation, rulings and cases, individual taxpayer issues, agricultural and natural resources topics, ethics, trusts and estates, agriculture and natural resource tax issues, business tax issues, business entity tax issues, IRS issues, installment sales, tax benefits of home ownership, retirement tax issues, and individual tax issues. The schools were approved for up to 16 hours of continuing education credit by the IRS, Missouri Bar and for CFP continuing education. Total continuing education hours reported to IRS for the schools was 4,024 hours.

The teaching teams included CPAs, a former IRS stakeholder liaison, an IRS certified retired ag economics professor, an attorney, a certified financial planner, Missouri Department of Revenue, MU faculty and extension ag business specialists.

The evaluations had many positive comments and helpful suggestions. One comment from an online participant was “The video was outstanding — best I’ve seen on any CPE I’ve done live.”. Planning is underway to offer trainings in 2026. Local county residents benefit when local tax preparers have the opportunity to gain knowledge, which benefits their clients and communities. The tax schools are a program of the ag business and policy program of MU Extension, coordinated by Mary Sobba with help from a team of ag business specialists throughout the state.

The resources for the schools included the IRS, 2025 National Income Tax Workbook from the Land Grant University Tax Education Foundation, and materials written by the instructors.

The 2025 school attendance totaled three hundred eighty-nine people, which was an 11% increase from 2024. The participants were from throughout Missouri and two from out of state.





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

Health and Human Sciences



Cooking Matters

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

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

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

Cooking Matters facilitator about a class participant



A Matter of Balance helps older adults overcome their fear of falling, increase their activity levels and reduce their risk of falls. In eight classes, participants learn fall-prevention strategies, develop personal prevention plans, acquire balance-improving exercises and make lifestyle changes to minimize their fear of falling.

“I have cleaned my house of clutter for safety, put non-slip stickers on my tub floor, I’m getting much more regular exercise and I’m feeling stronger.”



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
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Opportunity



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Excellence



Health
& Well-Being

Christian County

Health and Human Sciences

A Matter of Balance Fall Prevention Program

Christian County MU Extension Office, January 15-March 12

Participants:

7

Sessions:

7

100% of participants surveyed **decreased** the extent to which their **concern about falling** interfered with normal social activities with family, friends, neighbors, or groups

B's A Matter of Balance Story

B. came to the A Matter of Balance program with occasional concerns of falling. Although she was steady on her feet, her family members were concerned about her falling. B. avoided the topic of falls when visiting with family because she knew they didn't agree on what B. should be doing and where she should be living. Through the A Matter of Balance program, B. learned how assertiveness is linked to falls prevention and how to communicate her needs to avoid falls. Additionally, B. learned several exercises that helped to increase her strength and flexibility, which might further reduce her fall risk. She shared the exercises with her physical therapist, who is interested in learning more about the program, serving as a guest healthcare professional during the program, and potentially referring the program to his clients. B. completed the program feeling more comfortable talking to her health care providers, family, and friends about falling. She has reduced her fear of falling, is now comfortable increasing her physical activity, and plans to continue exercising regularly.

"I now know
it's ok for me
to live
independently.
This program
has given me
the confidence
to do so."

B, A Matter of Balance
participant

Estimated Annual
Medical Cost Savings:

\$4,690



Health and Human Sciences

New Year, New You: Tips for Success in partnership with **One Nixa**

In this interactive workshop, Nutrition and Health Field Specialist Jenni Nevatt and MSU Dietetic Intern Madi Smith shared tips for making New Year's resolutions stick. There were 3 food demonstrations, tasty samples, and healthy recipes. Tuesday, January 28, 6:30 pm, Faught Administration Building



Of the **6 participants** surveyed after the workshop:

- 6 of 6 understand how to achieve success in reaching their health goals
- 5 of 6 plan to apply what they learned in this workshop to make a change in their behavior within the next four weeks. (1 person did not answer)
- 4 of 6 signed up to receive email notifications about upcoming programs from MU Extension.

Smoothies 101 in partnership with **One Nixa**

Nutrition and Health Field Specialist Jenni Nevatt and MSU Dietetic Intern Madi Smith got things shaking at this hands-on smoothie workshop! Participants made and tasted four different smoothies.

Tuesday, February 4, 6:30 pm, Nixa Junior High FACS classroom

Of the **13 participants** surveyed after the workshop:

- 13 of 13 understand the health benefits of smoothies
- 13 of 13 are familiar with multiple strategies to successfully make smoothies
- 13 of 13 are confident in their ability to find recipes for healthy smoothies
- 13 of 13 are confident they can adjust smoothies to fit their needs and preferences
- 12 of 13 will apply what they learned in this workshop within four weeks



Non-Hands-On Food Preservation Presentation in partnership with **Christian County CERT (Community Emergency Response Team)**

- Saturday, 10:00-11:00 am, February 8, Springfield
- Nutrition and Health Field Specialist Jenni Nevatt created and implemented a presentation about canning and dehydration basics. She brought canning equipment for participants to examine and shared 4 food preservation guide sheets. Approximately **45 participants**.

Diabetes Self-Management in collaboration with the Regional Arthritis Center at Nixa Community Branch Library

- Objectives: support informed decision-making, self-care behaviors, problem-solving, and active collaboration with the health care team, and to improve clinical outcomes, health status, and quality of life
- Thursdays, June 26-July 31, 12:30-2:30 pm
- 14 registrants, 12 completed 80% of the program

"One of the BEST programs I have ever taken!"

"The action plans were a game changer! The program reinforced the concept of making and adjusting plans for success."

"I got a blood glucose monitor, and I continue to check my levels."



Retiring in the Garden with Christian County Master Gardeners

- Objectives: review benefits of gardening, discuss unique health concerns for older adult gardeners, share gardening practices to address concerns, practice some stretches and mindfulness techniques
- October 28, 6:30 pm
- 28 participants

"These tips will keep me gardening!"



Stay Strong, Stay Healthy Strength-Training / Falls Prevention program
in partnership with **Christian County Library** at **Sparta Community Branch Library**,
and **Missouri State University Dietetics Program**

- Wednesdays & Fridays, 10:00-11:30 pm, June 4-July 30
- Objectives: improve health and quality of life by increasing physical activity and promoting healthy eating habits that reduce frailty and fall risk



Outcomes:

Of the *Stay Strong, Stay Healthy* (SSSH) participants surveyed...

- **4 of 4 improved** or stayed the same in the Chair Stand Test, which assesses **lower-body strength and endurance** needed for activities such as climbing stairs; walking, and getting up from a seated position
- **4 of 4 improved** or stayed the same in the Chair Sit-and-Reach Test, which assesses **lower-body flexibility** important in joint pain control and needed for activities such as putting on socks and shoes, dressing and using stairs
- **1 of 4 improved** or stayed the same in the Back Scratch Test which assesses **upper-body and shoulder flexibility** needed for activities such as combing hair, dressing and reaching
- **3 of 4 improved** or stayed the same in the 10-Foot Up-&-Go Test which assesses the **agility and balance** needed for activities such as standing quickly from a seated position and walking



\$4,0960

in estimated annual
healthcare
cost savings

*"I am much
stronger and can
more easily get up
and down."*

Participant Quotes from *SSSH*.

"My confidence level has improved."

"Really enjoyed the community aspect of the course."

"This was a great environment to learn new ways to get moving."

Health and Human Sciences

Local Impact

Mental Well-Being

During the past year, I delivered evidence-based programs to strengthen mental health awareness, knowledge, and response skills across the Southwest Region. Programs taught included **Adult Mental Health First Aid, Youth Mental Health First Aid,** and a variety of **mental health awareness presentations** tailored to community needs.

Through **12 Youth or Adult Mental Health First Aids, 175 Missourians** were reached with information on recognizing mental health challenges, reducing stigma, and connecting individuals to appropriate resources. **Counties Served through Mental Health First Aid Programs in the Southwest Region: Barry (2), Barton (2), Dade (1) Greene (74), Howell (3) Jasper (6), Lawrence (3), McDonald (3), Newton (2), Taney (1) Wright (1) counties.**

Through MU Extension, community members were empowered not only to prioritize their own mental health and well-being, but also to extend that support to family members, friends, and community settings. Mental health awareness outreach also extended beyond traditional classrooms. Programming at the **Greene County Homeschool Fair, and Missouri State University Safety Day** reached families from multiple counties, expanding the regional impact of Extension's mental health education efforts.

Collectively, these efforts generated an estimated **\$35,000 economic impact statewide and \$19,600 economic impact** for the Southwest Region by increasing mental health literacy, improving early intervention, and strengthening community capacity to respond to mental health needs.



Health and Human Science

Profiles and stories



Aging Well Programs

With nearly 168,000 age 65+ in Southwest Region addressing social connection and well-being is essential. *Aging Well* programs help reduce loneliness and support healthy aging through meaningful education and community engagement. In 2025, 16 programs were delivered across 48 sessions and reached 156 older adults in 6 counties. Through partnerships with senior centers, libraries, and health organizations, participants explored topics such as brain health, fall prevention, and Alzheimer's education.

MU Extension Summer Internship

This summer, Missouri State University Child and Family Development intern Madison McCord gained hands-on experience with MU Extension across the Southwest Region, exploring a wide range of programs and completing a final project focused on rural mental health resources for youth and families.

"Spending time with the Greene County MU Extension team as an intern has exceeded every expectation I ever had. The support I have received from each staff member has been heartfelt and genuine. Their wisdom, patience, and encouragement makes me feel valued every single day. I have learned so much from their real-world experience and welcoming nature. It's rare to find a group of professionals so dedicated to helping the community and eager to share their knowledge. One of the best parts of this internship has been the opportunity to see the wide variety of programs in action. Being able to engage in such valuable programs that impact community members across southwest Missouri has been extremely eye-opening. Although my time is not over yet, I cherish every connection made and lesson learned thus far."



SW-REEC Mental Health Awareness Presentation

Through a regional Mental Health Awareness presentation at the Southwest Research, Extension, and Education Center, **113 youth from multiple school districts across the Southwest region** were reached. The session increased awareness of mental health and connected youth to critical supports, including the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, telehealth counseling options, and local and statewide mental health resources, strengthening access to care and support for youth and families in the region.



Christian County

Health and Human Sciences

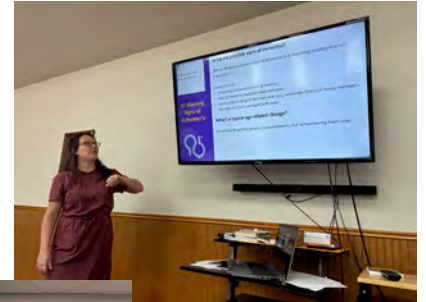
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Collectively, these efforts generated an estimated **\$18,524 economic impact** for the Southwest Region for aging well.

Counties Served through Aging Well Programs in the Southwest Region: Chrisitan (4), Greene (93), Jasper (14), McDonald (52), Stone (4), & Taney (5)



Health and Human Science

Profiles and stories



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SNAP-Ed Public Value Statement 2025

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Education or SNAP-Ed) brought \$11,419,598 in federal funds to Missouri. The funds support engagement with 70,722 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients and eligible citizens of Missouri who learned about being active and healthy eating on a budget. This year we had 970,939 indirect educational contacts through newsletters, health fairs, and food pantries.

747 direct and indirect contacts were made in Christian County. Participants in SNAP-Ed 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 also reduces healthcare costs over the participant's lifetime, saving taxpayer money in reduced public healthcare benefits and insurance premiums.

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.

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.



Extension

University of Missouri

Our job is to partner with communities to find solutions with credible, science-based information that will help you:

- Grow safe and healthy food
- Build and grow profitable businesses
- Improve your health and relationships
- Increase agricultural production
- Update professional training in business, health and safety
- Engage youth as valued, contributing citizens

Explore the MU Extension website and the Christian county page to discover how MU Extension can enhance your life.

Christian County Extension Center

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Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Christian-County-MU-Extension>

Office Hours: Monday-Wednesday 8 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Thursday 8 a.m. — 3:30 p.m.

"Equal opportunity is and shall be provided to all participants in Extension programs and activities, and for all employees and applicants for employment on the basis of their demonstrated ability and competence without discrimination on the basis of their race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, or status as a Vietnam-era veteran. This policy shall not be interpreted in such a manner as to violate the legal rights of religious organizations or military organizations associated with the armed forces of the United States of America."