

Picture taken by Caroline Herigon



UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI EXTENSION

# Cooper County 2025 Annual Report

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**SERVE MISSOURI.  
DELIVER MIZZOU.**

**MU** Extension  
*University of Missouri*

an equal opportunity/ADA institution



**VICE CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE**

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Columbia, MO 65211

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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 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Chadwick C Higgins'.

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

# WHO WE ARE

## Faculty and Staff



- Todd Lorenz  
Field Specialist in Agronomy
- Caroline Herigon  
4-H Youth Program Associate
- Maddison Whitaker  
Office Manager
- Elaine Anderson  
Interim Regional Director /  
Extension Engagement  
Specialist
- Gene Schmitz  
Field Specialist in Livestock
- Kathi Mecham  
Field Specialist in Horticulture
- Joni Harper  
Field Specialist in Natural  
Resources
- Landon Bax  
Field Specialist in 4-H Youth  
Development

## Council Members

- Joshua Siegel, Chairman
- Kirt Lewis, Vice Chairman
- Allison Trabue, Secretary
- Kim Burnett, Treasurer
- Anecita Alvizo
- Patty Dick
- Nancy Krutzch
- Bethany Pfeifer
- Danny Larm, County Commissioner
- Jackie Hickam, Master Gardener  
Representative
- Ronald Anderson, MFA  
Representative
- Steve Young, City of Boonville  
Representative

## County Executives

- George Monk  
Presiding Commissioner
- Gary Kammerich  
Easter District Commissioner
- Danny Larm  
Western District Commissioner

# BUDGET AND MORE

## Appropriations budget

Income	
County Appropriations	95,000
Total Income	95,000
Expenses	
Salaries/Benefits	
Office Personnel	46,000
YPA Position	28,000
Travel	4,900
Telephone	1,600
Office Supplies/Service	4,425
Utilities	3,240
Insurance	2,535
Furniture & Equipment	4,000
Total Expenses	95,000

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



## Local support

Did you know you can donate directly to Cooper 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.

# 2025 Cooper County State Fair Farm Family

**Dr. Wiley and Dr. Maryellen McVicker** of Boonville were selected and then honored during the 68<sup>th</sup> annual Missouri Farm Family Day at the Missouri State Fair. For 46 years Dr. Wiley McVicker has owned and operated a veterinarian office in Cooper County. They both have served terms on our Council and dedicated many hours of time to our youth in agriculture. The annual event is sponsored by five partner agencies: the Missouri Farm Bureau; the Missouri Department of Agriculture; the Missouri State Fair Commissioners; the MU College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources; and MU Extension.

**Front row (left to right)**

Bailey Schneider, The McVickers, Governor Mike Kehoe, Lisa Washburn

**Back Row (left to right)**

Jamie Johansen, Todd Hayes, Jason Moore, Byron Roach, Davin Althoff, Rob Kallenbach



## 2025 Cooper County Century Farm Recipients

**Farm Name:**

Draffen/Dick Farm

**Current Owner:**

Patricia A. Dick

**Year Established:**

1920

**Original Owners:**

George and Ola May Draffen  
(Patty's Grandfather in law pictured to the right)



**Farm Name:**

Muntzel – Watkins

**Current Owner:**

Gary and Barbra Watkins

**Year Established:**

1905

**Original Owners:**

Peter L. and Tessie J. Muntzel  
(Grandparents to Gary)

# UM SYSTEM COUNTY IMPACTS

## MU Extension in Cooper Community Impact Report

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

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





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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 Healthy Living** programming teaches skills for healthy choices and lifestyles, enhancing overall well-being and equipping youth to tackle life's challenges. Emphasizing social-emotional health, 4-H fitness, health, nutrition, and safety programs cultivate confident, caring young leaders who prioritize mental and physical well-being.

**4-H Feeding Missouri has helped provide over 2 million meals to neighbors in need across the state in the last seven years.**



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

### Local Impact

**Cooper County 4-H** has continued to grow through the wide variety of opportunities we have offered over the past several years. Enrollment is increasing, new volunteers are joining our program, and youth are discovering new ways to explore their interests within our organization. Our **six 4-H community clubs** provide meaningful opportunities for young people to build positive relationships with peers and supportive adults outside of their family unit. In addition, **our in-school 4-H activities** help foster connections among youth from a variety of backgrounds, while ensuring our programs reach those who need them most. These activities include **4-H Embryology, farmers market information booths, Youth Futures classes, nutrition education**, and more.

This past fall, we have had **around 20 new members join our program!** This is a very positive increase in new enrollments, We look forward to continue reaching new youth audiences in Cooper County. Our youth have done a fantastic job of utilizing the skills they gain in 4-H to be of service this year as well. **From 4-H Day at the, 4-H Feeding Missouri Drives, and even a member achieving the 4-H Key Award**, our youth strive to help anywhere needed. On top of county-wide service projects, our 4-H clubs cultivate their own service projects to benefit their home-towns and teach our kids the importance of responsibility and civic duty.



### Profiles and stories



Service projects are an integral part of 4-H. **Our mission is to build character and empathy within our 4-H members**, so that they can learn the importance of sharing their skills and abilities with others. This fosters a sense of purpose and sets our youth up for success in tackling large scale community challenges in the future.

Encouraging youth to **take ownership of service projects** allows them to develop a sense of pride, confidence, and an understanding of their impact on others. Fostering confidence in youth by allowing them to make decisions in important activities, sets them up for a life of responsible experience based-choice making. Youth deserve to have opportunities to feel their voice matters and that they can make a difference.

**In-school outreach programs through 4-H**, allow us to provide essential services to students most in need. Our programs can help support current lessons teachers are working on throughout the semester and provide outside material students can utilize in other areas of life. Nutrition programming helps support science learning, as well as provide successful life skill tools.



# Cooper County

## Missouri 4-H



**4-H Homecoming Parade Float – September 2025**



**4-H Day Camp – July 2025 – Leadership Games**

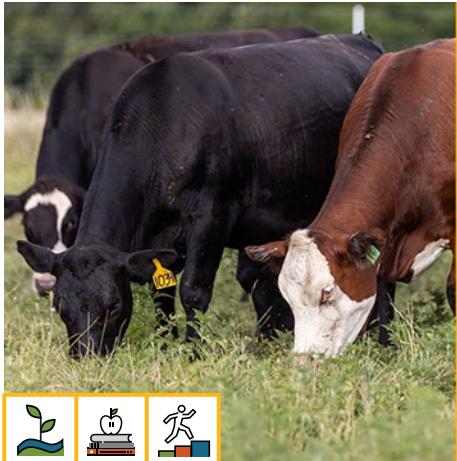


**4-H Sundae Funday – March 2025 – Cooper Co Canine Unit Demo**



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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 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 2025, 2,125 Missouri Extension Master Gardeners completed over 112,713 VOLUNTEER HOURS throughout the state, a value of \$3.9M dollars.**



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

## Agriculture and Environment

### Local Impact - Boonslick Master Gardeners



Throughout the year the local Master Gardeners host plant sales to make money for their chapter at the **Boonville Farmers Market**.



This year the Master Gardeners tried something new, they **hosted a plant swap**. Everyone brought plants and exchanged them.



The Master Gardeners take care of many different landscaped areas all over Cooper County. They **rely on the volunteers** and in exchange receive required service hours.



Number of Volunteers - **18**

Number of Volunteer Hours – **1566.45**

Dollar Value of Volunteer Hours -  
**\$54,497**

(\*Independent Sector at \$34.79/hour)

Number of Continuing Education Hours -  
**174.30**

Number of Advanced Training Hours –  
**29.50**

## Agriculture and Environment

### Local Impact - Boonslick Master Gardeners

Every year the Boonslick Master Gardner's host a summer gardening class for local kids, **Children's Learning Garden** This year they had a record high attendance of 55 kids to sign up. They teach the kids how to prepare a garden start to finish. They made recipes with their crops and a lot of crafts.



## Agriculture and Environment

### Profiles and stories



**Todd Lorenz MU Extension Field Specialist in Agronomy** guided State Entomologist, Iviar Valmorbida through several crop fields and collected samples from Cooper County. **The first Missouri Identified Soybean Tentiform Leafminer** was found.



All Cooper County Extension Staff worked directly with the **Pilot Grove School District** to put together a gardening program funded by a gardening grant. The students are raising strawberries in their hydroponic tower. Next spring they will have a fully functional garden for the cooking staff to use the produce for healthy breakfast and lunches. This Program is called **Farm to School**.

**Gene Schmitz, MU Extension Field Specialist In Livestock** reports — Regional Specialists continued working with MU faculty to harvest native warm season grass (NWSG) plots with the goal to develop PaddockTrac forage yield estimates for native warm season grass species. **PaddockTrac is an integrated electronic forage measurement and yield estimation system.** Forage height readings are correlated with clipped sample weights to develop equations to calculate yield estimates. Samples were collected from four NWSG plots at University of Central Missouri in Warrensburg. These data support continuing work at MU.



PaddockTrac sensor calibration harvest on native warm season grass plots at UCM-Warrensburg

## Agriculture and Environment



This year, the **Pesticide Applicator Training** was expanded to include several additional categories. In **Cooper County** a total of **32** producers completed the **Private** Applicator certification, and **17** producers completed their **Commercial** Applicator Certification. Todd Lorenz is shown to the left teaching the PAT curriculum to a group of producers. Our office also provided the county with **141 soil tests** utilized by both gardeners and homeowners as well as agriculture forage and livestock production.

**Todd Lorenz MU Extension Field Specialist in Agronomy** – Field Regional Private Pest Applicator training courses certify producers for purchasing restricted use pesticides. **Pests limit yields nationally by approximately 30%**; safely controlling them using integrated pest management maintains economic value while protecting the environment. As a result of our Private Pesticide Applicator Trainings crop producers and their advisers will not only be aware of the latest research related to pest and pesticide management but will also learn appropriate techniques of using that information to build efficient integrated pest management systems.

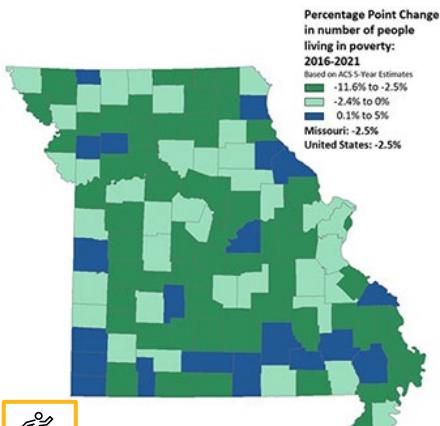


**Todd is shown teaching students about ATV / UTV safety which is another important topic that he covers throughout the region.**



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## Business and Community



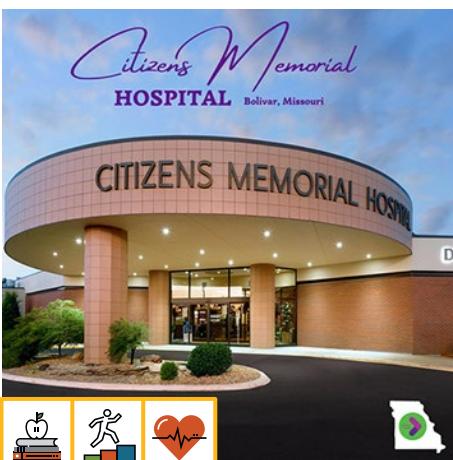
The **Missouri Economy Indicators (MEI)** series explores business, industry and workforce topics that affect Missouri's economy. The data is shared through newsletters and on social media. MU Extension faculty and staff receive talking points and collateral to share with local stakeholders.

**In 2022, MEI published 15 issues, and MEI online resources were accessed MORE THAN 5,000 TIMES. Two out of five MEI newsletter recipients reported using the information to help guide policy or decision-making in their work.**



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.**



**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.**

### Legend



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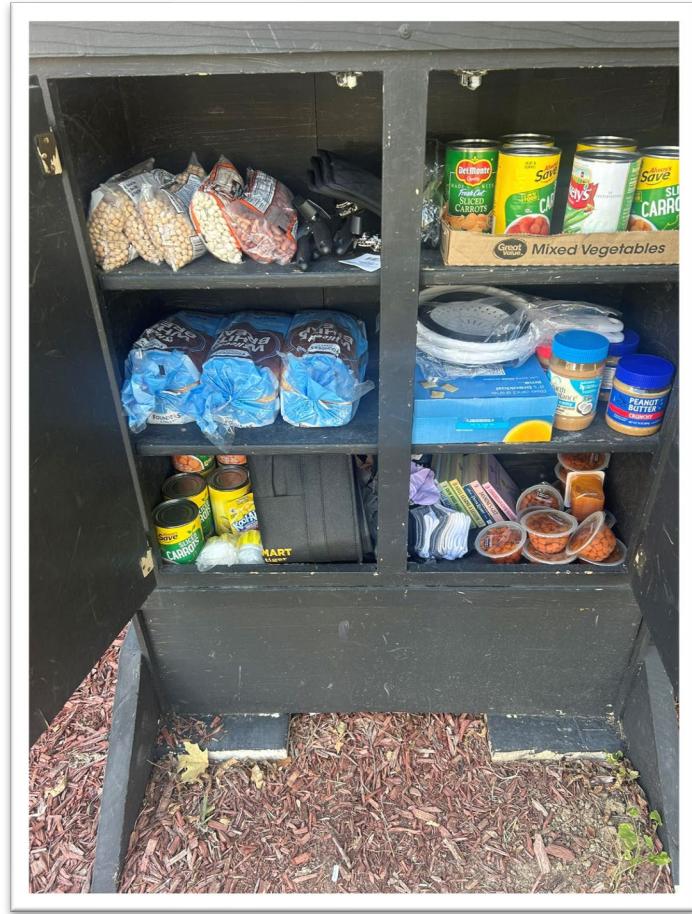
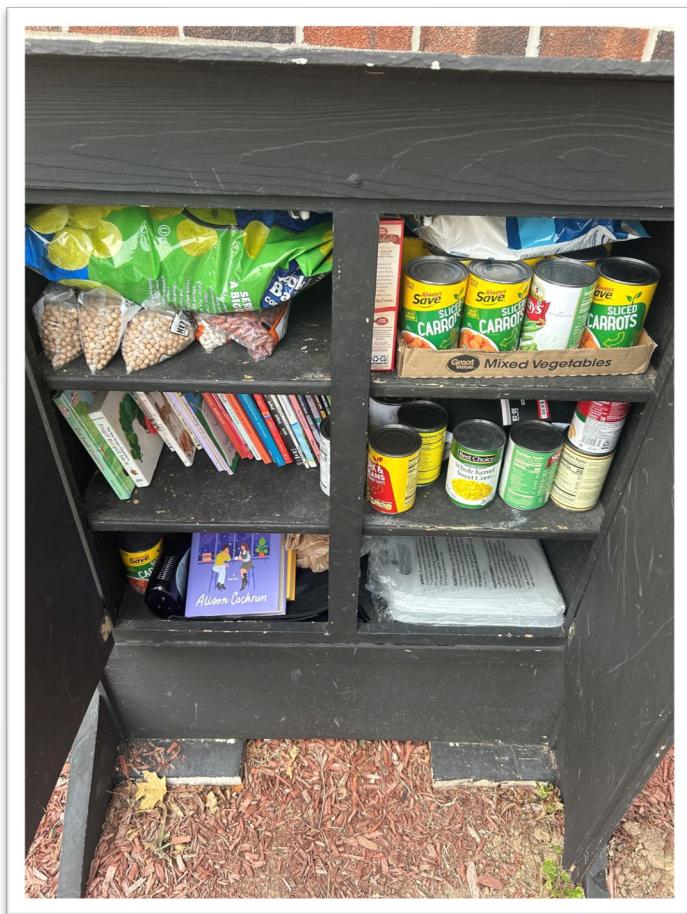
Health & Well-Being

## Business and Community

### Local Impact

**Missouri Good Neighbor Week** (Sept. 28–Oct. 4) continues to grow into one of the most impactful outreach events of the year. This year, 54 county extension councils across Missouri organized and reported projects that celebrated kindness, strengthened local relationships, and introduced more people to the work of Extension. Their creativity and community spirit helped spark thousands of acts of neighboring across our state.

For our Good Neighbor Week Contribution, we collected and donated the following number of items to the **Boonville Pantry on Main Street**. Canned / boxed food: 40.11 lbs., Books: 25, New Socks: 26, Various MU branded kitchen supplies. We also influenced others in the community to donate to the “Take What You Need, Give What You Can” Pantry.



## Business and Community

### Profiles and Stories

#### Mary Sobba Field Specialist in Agriculture Business - Extension Tax Schools

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 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.



## Business and Community

**Amie Breshears MU Extension Field Specialist in Ag. Business** - Farm Management – **On My Own “What’s it Worth”** helped landowners and operators understand **ag leases and farmland values, rental rates, and custom work costs**. The program debuted in the spring of 2024. Because of updated farmland values and rental rates survey data, as well as positive evaluation response, in-person and **online programs were offered in 2025**. I created the program in response to questions I was getting from sole landowners about their farmland and farm operations.

### By the numbers:

- 38 registrants
- **100% would recommend the program to others**
- 3 presenters
- 4 states represented – Missouri, Iowa, Tennessee
- 25 Missouri counties represented – Benton, Bates, Boone, Camden, Cass, Chariton, Cole, **Cooper**, Dade, Dallas, Grundy, Henry, Hickory, Holt, Howard, Jackson, Johnson, Lawrence, Livingston, Newton, Polk, Pulaski, Shelby, St. Francois, Webster
- 10 West Central Region counties represented - Benton, Bates, Camden, Cass, **Cooper**, Dallas, Henry, Hickory, Johnson, Polk
- In-person sites: Cass, Henry, Morgan, Moniteau
- Partners included USDA-FSA, Soil & Water Conservation Districts, Ag Bankers, MU Center for Regenerative Agriculture

**Online classes discussing livestock shares and what constitutes a fair division between the landowner and the tenant.**

**Livestock Share – What's Fair?**

	Landowner	Tenant
Land	XX	
Machinery	X	
Breeding Stock	XXX	
Labor		X
Seed, Fert., etc.		X
Total Contribution	XXXXXX	XX
Share	75%	25%

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## Continuing Education



Established in 2002, the **Fire Officer Certificate Program** is designed for those who wish to further their professional development without the time and expense of traditional college classes. This program has been developed and evaluated to ensure it provides structured curriculum delivery and academic rigor. The program requires completion of 288 of instruction within three years.



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.



### Legend



Agricultural Growth & Stewardship



Economic Opportunity



Educational Access & Excellence



Health & Well-Being



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## Health and Human Sciences



### 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.



**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



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Health & Well-Being

## Health and Human Sciences

### Local Impact

**Gardening and Nutrition Classes** were popular this summer at the office. Casey, our previous NPA, hosted several adult classes including, **Families Eating Smart and Moving More and Eat Smart, Live Strong**. Participants were able to choose a free kitchen appliance to take home after completing 6 sessions. Casey and Caroline also hosted **Gardening for Kids** in the office each week this summer. They created a container garden in the back of the building and talked about the gardening process start to finish. They ended their series with a gardening tool for them to use at home. These classes were SNAP-Ed funded.



**“This class opened my eyes to portion control and how to move my body more at home. Little steps go a long way!” — Participant from Families Eating Smart and Moving More**



## Health and Human Science

### Profiles and stories



**Dragon Tales:** Caroline and Casey spoke to the Otterville Pre-school about eating healthy and they both took their reptile friends with them. The kids were fascinated with the animals and hopefully want to eat healthy like them too! They also used this topic for teaching at the Library. Casey teamed up with office manager, Maddison and they filmed a series on healthy eating for Facebook Reels with Caseys bearded dragon.



## Health and Human Sciences

**Misson Healthy Kids Day at State Fair Community College** – The Cooper County Extension employees, along with several campus professors, and local businesses, teamed up to host a kid's learning day. We discussed **where food comes from, made healthy snacks, 4-H topics, movement with an obstacle course, and a sibling relationship class**. We served the kids a healthy lunch and breakfast. The theme was a spy theme and there were **71 kids that attended**. They also looked for clues to solve a mystery. Each kid left with a spy pen and paper, a MU branded water bottle or lunch box, as well as a fun filled day of knowledge they did not have before.

