



UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI EXTENSION

Dunklin County 2025

Annual Report



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**SERVE MISSOURI.
DELIVER MIZZOU.®**

 **Extension**
University of Missouri

an equal opportunity/ADA institution

Dear County Commissioners, Elected Leaders, and Friends of MU Extension and Engagement,

As I reflect on the past year, I am struck by the remarkable progress we have made together.

MU Extension continues to deliver on its mission of linking the University of Missouri with every community across our state, ensuring that Missourians have access to the knowledge, resources, and partnerships they need to thrive.

Through the dedication of our faculty, staff, councils, partners, and advocates, MU Extension continues to make a measurable difference across Missouri. Last year, we had more than 1.5 million educational contacts and generated more than \$1 billion in economic impact. Building on that momentum, your support also helped secure a \$5 million recurring increase in state funding. This important milestone is already being invested in people, programs, and facilities to strengthen agriculture, improve health and well-being, support local economic development, and prepare youth for leadership through 4-H.

We have also adapted to new realities. Even as the sunset of federal SNAP-Ed funding forced hard choices, our commitment to delivering nutrition and health programs to families in need has not wavered. We are expanding investments in rural health, civic leadership and community development to address the priorities Missourians tell us matter most. We are also aligning our work with university, state, and federal priorities to maximize impact, whether in rural healthcare, agricultural innovation or workforce development.

Our strengths remain clear: people, programs, and partnerships. From nearly 6,000 4-H volunteers to county council members, master gardeners, and master naturalists, Extension thrives because of the dedication of those who serve. Our trusted, research-based content was accessed nearly 2 million times and downloaded more than 76,000 times last year, and innovative programs, from soil testing to urban revitalization initiatives, continue to meet Missouri's evolving needs.

Thank you for your continued partnership. MU Extension belongs to all Missourians, and together we will keep building resilient communities, fostering innovation, and preparing our state for the future.

With appreciation,

Chadwick C Higgins

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

WHO WE ARE – Local Office

Faculty and Staff



Amber Childers
Extension Engagement Specialist



Richard Rickman
Field Specialist in Labor & Workforce
Development



Mike Milam
Field Specialist in Agriculture &
Environment



Alexandria Shearer, Youth
Program Associate

OUR COMMUNITY

Every year Missourians turn to the University of Missouri (MU) Extension for practical knowledge, problem-solving, and guidance in navigating change. As a key resource for informed decision-making, we play a vital role in delivering this knowledge, fostering progress, and empowering individuals and communities to thrive.

OUR MISSION

As a land-grant institution, our mission is to **Bring Mizzou to YOU**. We bring the University of Missouri's cutting-edge research and expertise to the residents of the county, helping individuals, businesses, and municipalities make informed decisions that improve quality of life. Through our educational programs, we aim to strengthen communities, boost local economies, and promote sustainable growth by offering accessible, relevant, and responsive solutions backed by the resources of the University of Missouri System.

OUR MAIN PROGRAM AREAS

- › Agriculture
- › Business & Workforce Development
- › Community Development
- › Health and Human Science Initiatives
- › Nutrition & Health Education
- › 4-H Youth Development

WHO WE ARE

Faculty and Staff Resources

Sarah Denkler
Regional Director – Southeast



Randy Stephens
Field Specialist In Agriculture
Business



Jennifer Hall
4-H Youth Development
Educator



Audrey Johnson
Field Specialist in Human
Development



Traven Crocker
Field Specialist In Horticulture



Eric Johnson
Field Specialist in Nutrition &
Health



Council Members

We bring Mizzou to Dunklin County.

Angelica Crosby- Chairman
Ali Shearer- Secretary
Danny Ray - Treasurer

Members
Juan Toscano



County Commission

Dunklin County Clerk
Lary Ray



Don Collins Presiding Commissioner
Patrick McHaney 2nd District Commissioner
Ron Huber 1st District Commissioner

BUDGET AND MORE

Appropriations budget

Income	
County Appropriations	45,00.00
Total Income	45,00.00
Expenses	43,209.90
Salaries/Benefits	23,400.00
Travel	3,012.00
Telephone	3,700.00
Office Supplies/Service	6,350.00
Utilities	3,000.00
Insurance	2,200.00
Capital Repairs	1,547.90
Total Expenses	43,209.90

Return on investment

University System	183,695
Donations	14,000

For every dollar invested by the county, MU invests \$4.08.

Reach

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



Key Outcomes

Dunklin County Reach Report

4-H Youth Development

*** Hired YPA- 4-H**

*** 248 Participants**
3 Community Club Membership
245 In-School Participation

*Health and Human Sciences

***4,646 Contacts**
4,635 SNAP-ED Contacts
11 Community Health Engagement and Outreach

Agriculture and Environment

***150 Contacts**
142 Plant Production & Technology Contacts



Local support

Did you know you can donate directly to *(name of county)* 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.



Profiles and stories



During a 4-H sewing class, youth learned to set up sewing machines, follow patterns, and sew their own aprons. The girls proudly completed their projects, gained confidence in new skills, and expressed interest in owning sewing machines, with two parents planning to purchase them for Christmas. Several aprons were entered in the Delta Fair, where participants earned blue ribbons, highlighting the success and impact of the project.



During 4-H Horse Camp, youth learned proper horse care, grooming, and basic riding skills while building confidence and responsibility around horses. Through hands-on activities and teamwork, participants strengthened their horsemanship knowledge and developed respect for animal care and safety. By the end of camp, youth showed increased confidence, new skills, and excitement to continue learning and participating in 4-H horse programs.



Agriculture and Environment

Local Impact

Traven Crocker, Horticulture Field Specialists

MU Extension's horticulture programming in the county focused on consultation, building relations with local businesses, and delivering virtual horticulture education.

Impact

Direct contacts provided timely problem-solving and technical support to residents, totaling 3 one-on-one interactions. Built relations with local businesses to foster community partnerships with MU Extension.

Soil test, horticulture: 6

Program Examples: Individualized consultation

Direct Contact Topics: 3 participants

- Grow lights, commercial business
- Seed starting and selling, commercial business.
- Inquiry to master gardener program

Collaboration with 4-H

- Community garden planning

Poplar Bluff Extension Master Gardeners

In 2025, the Poplar Bluff Area Master Gardener chapter contributed 375 volunteer hours and 124 continuing education hours. These efforts are valued at \$13,046.25, based on the Independent Sector's 2025 rate of \$34.79 per hour.

Chapter Projects

- Ag Day, 83 participants
- Sierra Girls Garden and Grow, 6 participants
- Popeyes demonstration garden
- Butler County Exhibits and More, 165 participants
- Women's Aware event
- Mums fundraising sale

Extension Master Gardener Training: 2 sessions

- Spring, 1 participant
- Fall, 2 participants

Indirect & Virtual Reach

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



Controlled Environment Agriculture

Understanding Grow Lights

The goal of controlled environment agriculture (CEA) is to provide an adequate environment — support light, temperature, humidity, carbon dioxide (CO₂), water and nutrients — to optimize crop growth. Crops cultivated in protected environments, such as greenhouses or indoor farms, benefit from supplemental lighting. The selection of appropriate supplemental lighting can be daunting because of the many types of grow lights available, each offering benefits for different production situations. This guide describes major types of grow lights and key considerations for selecting and using them within hydroponic systems (Figure 1).

Know your system

The selection of grow lights depends on the CEA system and farm situation. If you are planning a CEA facility, you might be considering either a traditional greenhouse, which uses sunlight and adds supplemental light when needed, or a full indoor production system, where all lighting is supplemental. If you are adapting an existing system, you might be wanting to update your greenhouse lighting, to switch from buying seedlings to starting your own in a high tunnel, or to make any other type of change that would affect your lighting system.

The amount of heat a lighting system generates and the space it occupies are important to consider. These considerations are especially crucial for "stacked" or vertical growing systems in which vertical clearance is limited and the plants are closer to the light source. In that scenario, high-pressure sodium (HPS) lamps would not be an option because their radiant heat could burn the plants, and they are too bulky for the limited space available. LED lights and fluorescent lamps, which can both be close to plants without burning them, would be an option, but these lights will also provide some heat to the plants on the shelf above them. Some LED lights allow you to separate the driver and power supply from the light fixture to balance heat dissipation. Other LED



Figure 1. Grow lights are an important component of hydroponic systems in controlled environment agriculture.

features include the ability to dim or chain multiple lights, which saves on outlet space, or connect to controllers from other brands.

Before shopping for grow lights, identify these key aspects of your system:

- Existing or new construction
- How much natural sunlight could be used
- Potential return on investment for the CEA system
- What types of lights may or may not be feasible in your system

Once you have identified the grow light possibilities for your system, you can begin comparing the light options based on four factors of lighting: light quality, uniform coverage, intensity/quantity and cost.

Light quality

Visible light represents a portion of the radiation coming from the sun. Solar radiation is divided into wave frequencies, or wavelengths, which vary between different parts of the total light spectrum. Visible light is composed of multiple colors, with each color indicating a different wavelength (Figure 2). Plants evolved to use light ranging from ultraviolet to far-red for many physiological processes.

The ability of a plant to yield sugars through photosynthesis peaks in the wavelengths landing in the

Written by
Traven Crocker, CEA, Plant Specialist in Horticulture
Matt Ewert, Independent Writer

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Local Impact

Rob Russell with
A Bootheel farmer for ride.



Local Youth at Career Day



Students at Career Day at Delta Center

Agriculture and Environment

Profiles and stories



Market Outlooks: As a result of the increased market uncertainty and low commodity prices I presented multiple market outlooks. They included: 2025 Crop Conference, Perry County Farm Bureau Crop Conference, Big River Ag Grower meeting and TRC Beef Market Outlook.



Southeast Missouri Outlook: I began a newsletter in April that is sent out monthly to 1318 farmers, ag business professionals and ag lenders in the region. The newsletter has been a huge success. Feedback from recipients, as well as data from DotDigital, our email platform, indicates a total open rate of 81%.

Canola Budget: New to the MU Extension line-up of crop budgets is a winter canola budget. I worked with industry representatives and other MU faculty to develop a winter canola budget that will be available to producers to view and download. Interest in canola production has grown in Southeast Missouri as a result of new markets that are available as well as profitable contacting options for canola.





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

Business and Community

Dunklin County, 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

Dunklin County Extension Council adds new members and 4-H YPA.

Dunklin County Commissioners continue MU Extension support.

Dunklin County Century Farms Lanny-Monique Watson Henry McHaney

2025 Dunklin County Farm Family Payte-Laura Harris (2026 in April)

**SEMO Health Network opens New Madrid facility. Childers/Rickman on the Board.
Bernie Kennett**

**With support from Dunklin County MU Extension brings Rural Immersion with
Bootheel 20 future medical students to the region.**

**MU Extension/Delta Center REEC collaborate to bring programs to Dunklin County.
South school Kennett Holcomb Elementary**

ZOU to You meeting in Kennett draws participants from Dunklin county.

**Students from across the region attend the FDREEC Career Day.
Southland Senath-Hornersville Holcomb Malden Campbell Clarkton**

**Rural Immersion to Dunklin County for a day June, 2025.
Elk Chute Delta Peanut SEMO-Kennett Weaver Farm Forest Roots**

**Delta Center hosts annual Field Day for regional Representatives/Fermers/Ag
Kennett Airport**

Southeast Labor and Workforce Summit in Sikeston (Bootheel Collaboration).

**Rob Russell, MU Business and Communities has Dunklin County tour.
Delta Peanut Gamble-Bedwell Printing Terry Fuller Farms**



**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

Audrey Johnson
Field Specialist in
Health and
Human Sciences



Serving - Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Dunklin, Mississippi, New Madrid, Pemiscot, Perry, Scott, and Stoddard counties

Extension Health & Human Sciences is dedicated to helping Missourians improve their lives. Using research-based education and proven strategies, Extension professionals work in partnership with communities to improve conditions that help Missourians live better where they live, learn, play and work. Our programs help individuals and families, rural and urban, reaching Missourians of all ages in every county and the city of St. Louis.

Senior Technology Classes

Five Senior Technology classes were taught, with a total of 41 participants, in the following counties: Mississippi(1), Scott(2), and Stoddard(3). The classes included:

- **AI All Round**
- **All Things Zoom**
- **Finding Information Online**
- **Protecting Your Personal Information Online**
- **Digital Coupon Tools**

Surveys taken after sessions showed that of the 41 participants,

- 15 reported being interested in trying something new because of the program
- 11 reported wanting to learn more about the topic that was covered
- 11 stated it is extremely likely they would attend another Senior Planet program



Participants stated the classes were “Very informative”, “Good to get new knowledge”, “Need to keep up with increasing technology”, “This program (AI All Around) is informative and helpful to the generation we live in”, “Great opportunity to receive information.”



**Agricultural Growth
& Stewardship**



**Economic
Opportunity**



**Educational
Access &
Excellence**



**Health
& Well-Being**

Dunklin County

Health and Human Sciences Impact

Local Impact

IMPACTS/OUTCOMES

Providing participants with the knowledge of what Hypertension is and how proper diet and exercise programs that MU Extension provide can help control this disease.

Giving student athletes a competitive advantage by providing the Performance Nutrition Program Series One-Time Presentation for Hydration, Pre-Post Competition Meals. Allows students to know how staying hydrated can elevate their play as well as warning signs of getting dehydrated. What meals to eat to give the best competition and what meals to eat to help after competition,

Several community engagement attempts at Kennett Senior Oaks Nutrition Center for Aging Matters. Performance Nutrition Series Program One-Time Presentations

Hydration and Pre-Post Competition Meals at Senath, Southland, and Campbell Jr. and Sr, High school basketball and baseball teams.



UM SYSTEM COUNTY IMPACTS

MU Extension in (your county name) Community Impact Report

This report offers a detailed overview of how MU Extension positively impacts [Your County] 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 Dunklin 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 Dunklin county's Grand Challenges Report.](#)

