



UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI EXTENSION

Iron County 2025

Annual Report

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**SERVE MISSOURI.
DELIVER MIZZOU.®**

 **Extension**
University of Missouri
an equal opportunity/ADA institution



Office of Extension
and Engagement
University of Missouri

VICE CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE

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

As I reflect on the past year, I am struck by the remarkable progress we have made together. MU Extension continues to deliver on its mission of linking the University of Missouri with every community across our state, ensuring that Missourians have access to the knowledge, resources, and partnerships they need to thrive.

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

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

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

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

With appreciation,

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

WHO WE ARE

Faculty and Staff

Brad Coleman

4-H Youth Development
Field Specialist

Leslie Davis

Nutrition Program Associate

Karen Rapp

Secretary

Jerry Richards

Cooperative Feral Hog
Outreach Educator

Conrad Gibbs

Youth Program Associate

Stephanie Schindler

Extension and Engagement
Specialist

OUR COMMUNITY

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

OUR MISSION

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

OUR MAIN PROGRAM AREAS

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

Faculty and Staff Resources

Sarah Barks

Community Health Field Specialist

Donna Aufdenberg

Horticulture Field Specialist

Julie Estes

Small Business Consultant

John Fuller

Field Specialist in Human Development

Michael Graham

Field Specialist in Livestock

Sarah Higgins

Field Specialist in Natural Resources

Evan Holley

Field Specialist in Nutrition and Health

Jason Morris

Agricultural Business Field Specialist

George “Anthony” Ohmes

Field Specialist in Agronomy

Jakob Pallesen

Director, Mo SBDC at SEMO State University

Council Members

Ken Wooten, Chairman

John Underwood

Kelci Faulkner

Meghan Lollar

Raymond Harr

Tiffany Wigger

Courtney Healey



County Commission

Jim Scaggs, Presiding Commissioner

Dustin Hinkle, Associate
Commissioner-Southern District

Joshua Campbell, Associate
Commissioner-Western District



BUDGET AND MORE

Appropriations budget

Income

County Appropriations	34,000
Total Income	34,000

Expenses

Salaries/Benefits	21,010
Travel	4,244
Telephone	1,575
Office Supplies/Service	1,119
4-H Materials	800
Insurance	1,195
Total Expenses	32,881

Return on investment

University System 92,485

For every dollar invested by the county, MU invests \$2.72.

Reach

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

Key Outcomes

- The Iron County Cattle and Forage Field Day reached over 60 participants and highlighted best farming practices for local producers. 100% of participants indicated they would recommend the program to fellow producers.
- Iron County 4-H reached over 500 youth in 2025.
- Over 100 youth participate in community 4-H clubs. Those clubs and projects that the youth participate in are led by 65 volunteers.
- 10 individuals trained to receive a private pesticide applicator license.
- 87 soil tests were processed for Iron County residents in 2025.
- 4097 youth and adult participants took part in nutrition programming and education in Iron County.
- Iron County 4-H volunteers contributed over 11,000 hours of volunteer time towards the 4-H program in 2025
- 4 Iron County residents participated in an Alzheimer's educational event.



Local support

Did you know you can donate directly to Iron 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 IMPACT REPORT

This report offers a detailed overview of MU Extension's impacts, including data on those 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 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 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

The Grand Challenges Report reviews the most pressing issues facing Missouri communities. By focusing on these challenges, MU Extension 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 is addressing these challenges. Each section breaks down county-specific statistics compared to state averages.

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

PARTNERSHIPS

Extension programming would not be possible without the following partnerships. We are grateful for the support we get from these associates.

Iron County Commission

Iron County Soil and Water

Iron County Lions Club Fair

Arcadia Valley Lions Club

Livestock Iron County

Agriculture and Environment

Local Impact

The Show-Me-Select Replacement Heifer program

Created in 1998, the three objectives for the Show-Me-Select Heifer program are: 1. Improved heifer development through a Total Quality Management strategy. 2. Increased marketing opportunities for adding value for Missouri-raised heifers. 3. Creating reliable sources of quality replacement heifers based on management, reproduction, and genetics. This program utilizes a collaborative effort between the producer, the MU Extension livestock specialists, and local veterinarians to create a reliable source of replacement heifers in terms of genetics and management.

- **Two sales were held in 2025 at the Farmington Regional Stockyards. 240 total heifers sold from 15 producers.**
- **Gross revenue from the Farmington Show-Me-Select sales were \$943,600.00 in 2025.**



Participants at the Iron County Heifer Development Program

Michael Graham

Field Specialist in Livestock



East Central Show-Me-Select bred Heifer Sale



Heifer Development Program – Iron County

A heifer development program was offered in Iron County, reaching a total of 30 attendees. The program emphasized a whole-herd management approach to developing replacement heifers, with focused instruction on herd health, nutrition, and reproductive management. Participants learned the importance of sound recordkeeping and the use of reproductive tract scoring, along with pelvic measurements, as critical tools in successful heifer development. These practices were highlighted for their key role in meeting the standards and improving outcomes within the Show-Me-Select Heifer Development program, which is the key program that extension considers when discussing retention of heifers in cow herds.

Agriculture and Environment - Production

Local Impact

Iron County Fair

A highlight of my summer schedule is the Iron County Fair. An event that showcases the dedication, hard work, and commitment of local youth and families involved in livestock projects. Throughout the fair, multiple families took time to exhibit animals they have spent months caring for, feeding, and managing. These projects represent far more than a few days in the show ring, they reflect a year of responsibility, learning, and hands-on agricultural experience.

My role during the fair focused on the behind-the-scenes work that helps the livestock shows run smoothly. This included ensuring that accurate exhibitor and animal data were entered into the database used to generate the master livestock sale list. While not always visible to the public, accurate records are essential to a fair, transparent, and successful livestock sale and support both exhibitors and buyers.

Iron County Production Field Day

Producers gained valuable insight into the importance of well-designed and properly used cattle working facilities to improve both animal welfare and producer safety. Emphasis was placed on how thoughtful facility layout and handling practices can reduce stress on cattle, minimize the risk of injury to animals and handlers, and increase overall efficiency during routine management tasks such as vaccination, pregnancy checking, and sorting. Participants learned how key components including properly sized sorting pens, adjustable alleys, and the correct use of a working chute play a critical role in cattle flow and handler control. Sorting pens allow cattle to be calmly and efficiently separated, adjustable alleys accommodate different sizes

of cattle, and proper chute operation ensures cattle are securely restrained without causing unnecessary pressure or injury. By understanding and applying these principles, producers are better equipped to create safer, more effective working environments that support animal well-being while protecting the people who work with livestock.

Michael Graham

Field Specialist in Livestock

Client Contacts:

55 calls and emails

providing research-based livestock information.

Topics included:

- Soil health
- Forage testing
- Herd health
- Budget sheets for livestock enterprises
- Forage Nitrate Testing
- Equestrian nutrition



Participants at the Iron County Field Day (Cattle Working Facilities)

Agriculture and Environment

Horticulture Highlights – Donna Aufdenberg, Horticulture Specialist

Donna Aufdenberg offers horticulture programming in the Southeast Region in Missouri. Services offered include plant diagnostics, plant identification, insect identification, soil test assistance, greenhouse consultations and troubleshooting, and gardening programs.

In 2025, there were 1749 direct contacts through gardening programs where participants (locally and across the state) engaged in learning through in-person and online programs.

Popular Programs in 2025

- Beginning Hydroponics
- Hobby Greenhouses
- Growing and Using Herbs
- Gardening in Containers
- Growing Strawberries
- Seed starting
- Winter Sowing



Hands-on learning with container gardening



Demonstration Garden

Donna oversees the All-American Selections demonstration garden at the MU Extension office in Jackson, MO where over 400 plants can be observed growing. Over 250 gardeners from the surrounding counties visited the demonstration garden in 2025 to learn what annuals and perennial flowers do best in Missouri gardens. Each plant is labelled with a QR code leading to websites about the plants. Area Master Gardeners help maintain the garden.

Horticulture

/'hōrdə,kəlCHər/

Noun 1. the art or practice of garden cultivation and management

900+

Participants in 35+ Programs in the Southeast Region

800+

One-on-One Education
➤ Calls and Emails
➤ Walk-ins

Top Gardening Requests

Vegetable Gardening • Growing Berries • Planting Fruit Trees • Composting • Soil Testing • Raised Bed Garden • Hydroponics • Greenhouses

Garden Spade Newsletter reaches over 2,556 subscribers every month with a 9.6% increase in readership during 2025.

Each issue shares practical, research-based information that is “Reliable, Responsive, and Relevant” to Missouri Gardeners. Subscribe to the garden spade at <https://extension.missouri.edu/counties/cape-girardeau> or click the QR code at the right.





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

Forage Systems

Diversifying forage systems for greater resilience of the forage supply by implementing the use of warm and cool season forages, perennial and annual grasses, legumes, and forbs to meet the needs of Missouri's diverse livestock segment.

Grazing School teaches Management-intensive Grazing (MiG) methods that improve forage persistence and quality, increase the number of days of grazing in pastures, reduce dependency on hay, and conserve Missouri's natural resources. Two schools were offered in 2025. Thirty-one attended from Southeast, East Central, and Southwest Regions. **Twenty-four were livestock producers, with 83% planning to adopt MiG and 17% reporting they already practice MiG.**

Heifer Development, Pasture, and Forage Management event provided research-based information in grazing management, matching forages to livestock, extending the grazing season, and weed management to nineteen Iron County producers.

Iron County Cattle and Forage Field Day event provided soil fertility and management for forages to 64 Iron County producers.

One-on-one direct consultation on forage species, soils tests, nutrients, weeds and insects was provided to individuals across the region.

Pesticide Applicator Training

Pesticide applicator training rule changes went into effect in 2025, expanding training for private applicators. Private pesticide applicator training (PPAT) includes required General Pest Control (CORE) along with those seeking optional grain bin fumigation, soil fumigation, or aerial application training. Additionally, applicators that work under the supervision of commercial applicators are required to receive non-commercial restricted use pesticide (NRUP) training. Education on integrating pest management methods, protecting the environment, labeling, and reducing exposure risk while meeting federal and state requirements for restricted use pesticides was provided. Twenty-one PPAT events offered across the SE Region educated 130 applicators, with **one event in Iron that trained 10 applicators.**

Anthony Ohmes
Agromony Field Specialist



Picture: 2025 Spring Grazing School



Picture: 2025 Cattle and Forage Field Day

**Missouri Agriculture
contributes \$93.7 billion
annually to Missouri's
economy.***

*Missouri Department of Agriculture 2024
Status Report

Iron County

Missouri 4-H

Local Impacts



Iron County Youth Futures

Youth Futures programs have been implemented in the school districts in our county. Youth learn the steps necessary to enroll in college or a career center, choosing and getting into college, exploring possible majors and careers, skills for life, career skills for success and financial literacy including information on the FAFSA, scholarships, grants, and loans. Youth will write a resume, fill out a sample job application and cover letter, conduct a mock interview, complete tax forms, and create a scholarship letter. Youth who complete the program are eligible for 4-H Foundation Scholarships. In Iron County, over 100 youth have participated this year. The program has been expanded to include the Arcadia Valley and Black River Homeschool Cooperatives. New school-based programming includes personal finance and careers classes.

Youth Impact at a Glance

The Iron County 4-H Youth Development program had over 500 youth participants in 2025. Youth participated in Community 4-H Clubs, Youth Futures programs, and SPIN Clubs.

Iron County has 2 community clubs with 65 volunteers serving over 100 youth. The community clubs offered in Iron County are the Viburnum Blue Jays 4-H Club and the Iron County Arcadia Valley 4-H Club.

Our 4-H community clubs offer long term experiences in which members learn life skills such as leadership, citizenship, responsibility, and teamwork under the guidance of trained 4-H volunteers. Our community clubs contribute to the local communities by providing community service projects throughout the Iron County area.



Iron County Fair

Iron County hosted its annual fair in July. Members of the Viburnum Blue Jays 4-H Club, the Iron County Arcadia Valley 4-H Club, Ken Wooten and our Fair Board worked hard to make sure the fair was a success. The fair gives our 4-H Youth the ability to show their projects, livestock, and animals. **The livestock sale at the county fair raised over \$30,000 for youth** to invest in future 4-H animals projects and other endeavors. The event had an impact on the community bringing in more people and tourists to the Arcadia Valley area.

Iron County

Missouri 4-H

Local Impacts



4-H Serving our Communities

Each year, Missouri 4-H collects details on the time dedicated to giving back to our communities. **Iron County volunteers completed 11,000 hours of service for an estimated \$500,000 worth of volunteer time.** Our volunteers help support our 2 community clubs, 5 SPIN Clubs, and our Iron County Fair.

The Viburnum Blue Jays donated socks to the needy and used a grant to help with construction on their meeting site. They adopted a family and provided groceries to those in need.

The Iron County Arcadia Valley Club ran the concession stand for the rodeo and the Iron County Fair. They used funds and muscle to help remodel the Lions' Club Fairground building and to buy new equipment and supplies.

Southeast Missouri Regional Shoot

Cape Girardeau County hosted a regional shooting sports contest in June. This contest allowed 4-H youth from across the region to showcase their marksmanship and archery skills. The event featured 50 participants competing in 11 shooting sports disciplines. Iron County youth won multiple events and awards. All our youth who participated, qualified for the State Shooting Contest.



Sketchyville Mountain Biking Project

The Sketchyville Mountain Biking Project hosts a series of 3 stopwatch-timed downhill races through the summer. In addition to their stopwatch series, they also host a retro series and a beginners' series of races. They are the only mountain biking project in the state of Missouri. All money raised goes towards the local club's efforts to expand mountain biking in Iron County.



Health and Human Science - SNAPed

Profiles and stories

Leslie Davis, Nutrition Program Associate

SNAP Education

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Education or SNAP-Ed) brought \$11,419,598 in federal funds to Missouri in 2025 to support engagement with 70,722 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program recipients and eligible citizens. Through direct education, newsletters, health fairs, food pantries, and the Show Me Nutrition helpline, Leslie reached 5183 indirect contacts in Iron and Reynolds Counties.

MU Extension nutrition educators work with individuals and groups in a variety of settings throughout the state to meet a wide range of needs. Whether reaching out to youth and adults through direct education or working with communities to promote healthy policies, systems and environments (PSE), our goal is to help participants make behavior changes to achieve lifelong health and fitness. Often people tell us how the program has impacted their lives, even years after they have participated. Each day there are new stories that bring home the same important message: The MU Extension Family Nutrition Education Program makes a difference, a difference that means better health and fitness for a lifetime.

4097 participants (both youth and adult) received education in Iron County in 2025.



Leslie Davis teaching at a preschool in Iron County

2025 Success Story

"I taught Show Me Nutrition classes to the morning and afternoon preschool classes at the Viburnum Early Learning Center during the fall of 2024. During the vegetable lesson, students were able to taste broccoli, red, orange, and yellow sweet peppers, and shredded carrots. Students are guided through the tasting as they look with their eyes at the colors and textures, smell with their noses, and finally taste the vegetables with their tongues. After this, students are encouraged to take bites if they like.

Upon returning for the next lesson, the teacher informed me that a student's grandmother told her that her granddaughter had eaten broccoli and sweet peppers at home that week. The grandmother was thrilled to have her granddaughter, described as a picky eater, ask to eat vegetables at home!"



Serving Bollinger, Butler, Iron, Madison, Reynolds, St. Francois, Stoddard, Washington and Wayne Counties

Missouri Feral Hog Elimination Partnership (MFHEP)

Throughout the year, I delivered presentations to a wide variety of audiences. In the spring, I spoke at the Washington County Wildlife Association monthly meeting, DeSoto High School Career Day, and the Arcadia Valley Career Center Open House. During the summer, I presented to the 25 Gardener's Club of St. Francois County and represented the Partnership at the Annapolis Spring Fling and several Extension Council meetings. In the fall, I participated in numerous school-related events, including FFA Career Day at the Fisher Delta Research Center, Washington County Rural Safety Day, and Wurdack Farm High School Day. I concluded the year with presentations at the Ozark Regional Library in Fredericktown, the Missouri Farm Bureau Annual Convention, and numerous high school career days.

In 2025 a total of 6125 feral hogs were removed from Missouri, which represents 1020 more than were removed in 2024. Approximately 3,588,511 acres were monitored for feral hog activity. The highest numbers of feral hogs removed in the state were in Reynolds County (1256 hogs), Iron County (944) and Wayne County (811). A new addition to our aerial operations this year was a FLIR (Forward-Looking Infrared) equipped helicopter armed with military-grade infrared imaging technology. Used in conjunction with the gunship helicopter, it was flown to spot groups of hogs and then transmit location information to the gunship. This reduced scouting time and drastically increased efficiency. Of the 6125 swine we eliminated, 2720 were taken by aerial operations.

Iron, Reynolds and Washington County Soil and Water Conservation Districts were approved to receive new equipment, free of charge, to help remediate damage caused by feral hogs. Reynolds County received a no-till drill, and Iron and Washington Counties both received harrows.

Landowners with damage caused by feral swine can use this equipment free of charge. The availability of this equipment represents incredible cost savings for individuals who otherwise would have to pay out of pocket. Having no-till drills, harrows, and other equipment visibly stationed at SWCD offices clearly demonstrates our commitment to restoring private lands impacted by this invasive species.

During the past year, I traveled throughout the southern portion of the state to bring our message to County Commissions, Farm Bureaus, SWCDs, MU Extension offices, schools, community meetings, agricultural conferences, career days, feed stores, equipment dealers, powersports dealers, etc. My goal has been to make an effort to go anywhere there are individuals affected in some way by feral hogs.

Of particular note, this year we had extensive outreach efforts directed toward retail stores. During these times, we went in and set up our display (including our taxidermy hog), sharing many positive interactions with a cross-section of constituents. Some were very familiar with our efforts and successes, and others were unaware of our existence and asked lots of great questions.



The ongoing cooperation between MFHEP and Missouri Farm Bureau is evidenced by landowner signage.



A new harrow is delivered, free of charge, to the Iron County SWCD.

Health and Human Sciences — Mental Health

Sarah Barks Community Health Field Specialist

Mental Health Programming in Our Region

Across the report area, mental health remains a top concern, with all counties exceeding state and national averages for poor mental health days. The Community Voices data reflects widespread concern, with most respondents identifying mental health and substance use as their primary concerns. Rural and underserved communities continue to face provider shortages and stigma, making timely support difficult. These challenges guided my work throughout the year.

To address these needs, I engaged in Community Health Improvement initiatives, local coalitions, and statewide partnerships. I regularly presented at coalition meetings and provided tailored materials to improve behavioral health literacy and reduce stigma. In 2025, I was trained to deliver the Changing Our Mental and Emotional Trajectory (COMET) program and offered it six times with five partner organizations, reaching approximately 65 participants. I provided WeCanPROSPER Resilience Training (WRT) eleven times to about 130 individuals, offering virtual sessions open to anyone across the state and in-person professional development sessions for businesses and organizations helped expand access through a SEED grant, secured collaboratively with other specialists, that allowed both COMET and WRT to be offered at no cost.

Additionally, I supported workplace mental health through the Recovery Friendly Workplace Initiative (RFW) training and education. RFW Initiative empowers workplaces to support people affected by substance use disorders and those in recovery. I completed one RFW designation. Across all efforts, I partnered with more than 20 organizations to strengthen connections among agencies, providers, and community members and to expand support in underserved areas.

Overall, my work reached more than 1,000 people through trainings, presentations, and coalition engagement. Participants in COMET and WRT reported increased coping skills, greater confidence in supporting others, and improved awareness of mental health resources. RFW participants enhanced their workplace readiness to support employee well-being. Collectively, these efforts helped reduce stigma, expand behavioral health education, and strengthen resilience across rural Missouri.

Health and Human Sciences

Local Impact

John Fuller Human Development Field Specialist

In 2025, John Fuller partnered with the **Alzheimer's Association** to deliver an **Alzheimer's Bingo** program in Iron County, serving **4 participants** in a small-group setting.

This interactive program combined:

- Cognitive engagement
- Brain health awareness
- Social connection
- Education in a relaxed, supportive environment

Iron County has a growing population of older adult, and Alzheimer's disease impacts not just individuals, but entire families. Providing education and engagement opportunities:

- Supports brain health and cognitive stimulation
- Reduces stigma around memory loss
- Encourages early awareness and planning
- Connects residents to trusted resources
- Supports caregivers who often feel isolated

The partnership with the **Alzheimer's Association** strengthened the program by:

- Ensuring accurate
- Evidence-based information
- Increasing credibility and trust
- Connecting participants to ongoing support services

• **7.2 million Americans** age 65+ living with Alzheimer's in 2025 ($\approx 11\%$ of this age group).

[Alzheimer's Association](#)

• **Projected doubling** of older adults with Alzheimer's by 2050.

*Alzheimer's Association, Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures 2025