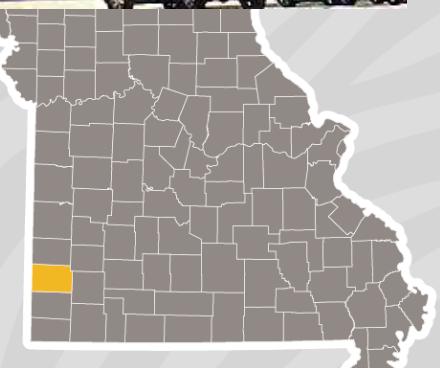




UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI EXTENSION

Jasper 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**

108 Whitten Hall

Columbia, MO 65211

PHONE 573-882-2394

EMAIL cchiggins@missouri.edu

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

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

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

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

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

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

With appreciation,

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



Headquartered in Jasper County

Amy McNary, Nutrition Program Associate
Lisa Robinson, Field Specialist in Regional Economic Development
Matthew Huchteman, Field Specialist in Horticulture
Janie Garner, Youth Program Associate
Virginia Bryan, Office Support
Mary Ann Pennington, Office Support

Other Faculty Serving Jasper County

Sarah Havens, Regional Director
Allen Brandes, Extension Engagement Specialist
Amber Allen, Field Specialist in Human Development
Reagan Bluel, Field Specialist in Dairy
Micah Doubledee, Field Specialist in Agronomy
Ian McGregor, Field Specialist in Livestock
Jennifer Lutes, Field Specialist in Agriculture Business
Bob McNary, Field Specialist in Youth Development
Caleb O'Neal, Field Specialist in Plant Science
Amy Patillo, Field Specialist in Labor and Workforce Development
Eden Stewart, Field Specialist in Nutrition and Health
In addition to our regional MU Extension faculty, local individuals and businesses can receive assistance through the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) located on the Missouri Southern State University (MSSU) campus.
Abi Rogers, Business Development
Allen Waldo, Missouri APEX Accelerator Specialist
Nicole Watson, Business Development

Council Members

Mary Frances O'Kelley, Chairman
Barbara Hunter, Vice-chairman
Gail Lawrence, Secretary
Lisa Daoud, co-Treasurer
Tom Flanigan, co-Treasurer
Josh Bard
Jennifer Chandler
Kara Cloud Benefiel
Charlie Davis
Kris Drake
Shiela Immesote-Foster
Larry Jackson
Sonora Jones
Lea Ann Keeling
Dale Lawrence
Tami Maneval
John Marshall
Robert Moore
Eric Osen
Judy Shaffer
Dorothy Shull
Amanda Smith
Jim Swatsenbarg
Roxanne Willard

County Commission

John Bartosh, Presiding Commissioner
Tom Flanigan, Eastern District Commissioner
Jimmy Morris, Eastern District Commissioner
Mike Landis, Western District Commissioner



BUDGET AND MORE

Appropriations budget

Income	
County Appropriations	79,142.00
Total Income	79,142.00
Expenses	
Salaries/Benefits	58,349.40*
Travel	4,965.72
Office Supplies/Service	1,930.33
Council Election/Advertising	228.61
Insurance	2,175.00
Capital Repairs	2,717.78
Total Expenses	70,366.84

*Includes \$6,600.00 offset by Carthage Area United Way and Fortner Foundation for 4-H Youth Program salary and benefits.

Return on investment

University System	154,000.00
Donations	10,970.61*
Program Revenue	5,519.00*
*includes 4-H, Master Gardener and Master Naturalist contributions	

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 associate salaries, staff mileage and council expenses.

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

Local Support

Did you know you can donate directly to Jasper 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, Master Gardeners or Master Naturalists.

Jasper County partners

Avilla R-13 Schools
Carthage Chamber of Commerce
Carthage Area United Way
Carthage Head Start
Carthage Public Library
Carthage R-9 Schools
Coalition of Charities Southwest Missouri
Crowder College
Crosslines of Carthage
Empire Market
Freeman Health Systems
Harry S Truman Coordinating Council
Innovate SOMO
Jasper County Youth Fair Board
Jasper R-5 Schools
Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce
Joplin Public Library
Jasper County Juvenile Justice Center
Lafayette House
McCune Brooks Health Foundation
Missouri Department of Conservation
Missouri Small Business Development Center
Missouri Southern State University
MOKAN Regional Partnership
North Joplin Head Start
Sarcoxie R-II Schools
Webb City Area Chamber of Commerce
Webb City Farmers Market
Webb City Public Library
Webb City R-7 schools

UM SYSTEM COUNTY IMPACTS

MU Extension in Jasper County Community Impact Report

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

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

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



County Highlights

Extension Leaders Honor Roll

Dorothy Shull has experienced a wide variety of responsibilities, events, leaderships, and awards. Her younger years were filled with family, school, church, and 4-H events. She and her sister Carolyn often sang as a duet at church, school and community events. Dorothy's early years in 4-H produced many sewing, cooking, and demonstration projects and awards in the county, region and state. One year, she was song leader and bugler at 4-H camp in Roaring River. Her nine years in Mt. Moriah 4-H later turned into County Queen in the parade for 4-H'ers.

Dorothy attended Carthage High School. She was a good student and participated in the Drum and Bugle Corp as a bugler. She was voted the Queen of the FFA Barnwarming.

After graduation in 1947, she moved to Kansas City to attend business college. Dorothy lived with Dr. Mooney and his wife, who was a nurse, to help take care of their three-month-old son Bill. After completing college, Dorothy moved back home and secured a job at the Jasper County Extension office working

for Virgil Sapp who she describes as the best county agent ever. In her role as secretary, she had many duties and programs to oversee and became well acquainted with area farmers. Dorothy met Ray Shull while working and they married in 1950. She then started a new life as a farm wife and Mother. Ray and Dorothy had five children and built a thriving and productive family farm life, first as dairy farmers then row cropping and cattle farmers.

Dorothy became active again with 4-H as La Grange 4-H Club's leader and an extension council member. Her children attended La Grange 4-H Club for 20+ years with Dorothy being highly involved each year as a project leader and club leader participating in community projects such as painting mailboxes, cleaning up roadside rest stops, "Share the Fun" 4-H activity, 4-H Achievement Day, and much more. Dorothy loved being a project judge and judged at county, regional and state level for many years. Dorothy was inducted into the Missouri 4-H Hall of Fame in 2007 and is an Honorary Member of the University of Missouri, Columbia Home Economics Alumni organization. She received the Jasper County Friend of 4-H Award in 2018.

She also enjoyed her many years as a member of the Jolly Neighbors Extension Club. Many treasured lifetime friendships and experiences came from these meetings. Dorothy has held several offices with her club. She also served as state president as well as a board member at state and national level.

Dorothy has been involved with AFS Intercultural Programs (formerly American Field Service, an exchange organization). This organization places students from foreign countries with American homes and families for a year. These students then can experience life as an American student. Dorothy hosted the first AFS student to Carthage and continued to be a volunteer for 32 years. Dorothy located suitable homes and schools, placed students, and managed situations for hundreds of students which could be very challenging. Students participating were from Japan, Sweden, Italy, Iceland, Ireland and more. Dorothy hosted Bruno from Switzerland, Liv from Norway, Claudine from France, and many, many, short-term individuals.

Throughout the years, Dorothy and her family hosted International Farm Youth Exchange (IFYE) students who were attending the University of Missouri, Columbia Mo., living with the family during college breaks, holidays and between semesters. Some of the favorites were Dryada (Wedya) and Chuburro from India; Meesra, from Formosa and Ernst from Germany.



Dorothy especially loves being patriotic, being born on July 4 at high noon. She is a current participating member of the Rhoda Fairchild Chapter of Daughter of the American Revolution (DAR). In addition to being Chapter Regent, she has held several local offices and has been elected to the state and national level, including State Regent, National Parliamentarian and national choir member. She highly anticipated the yearly National Conference held in Washington D.C. While there performing her officer duties, she taught tatting to fellow attendees. Dorothy has made and given away hundreds of tatted butterflies and crosses.

Dorothy has thoroughly enjoyed her public life and leadership. She's been a school bus driver, poll worker, worked the Red Cross blood drives, taught English as a second language, taught sewing classes to the community, been a member for numerous years of the Area Sheltered Facilities Board, done alterations and sewing, and has helped three area schools as a consultant to their FFA Parli law teams.

Dorothy, Ray and family attended the 1st United Methodist Church in Carthage, Mo. She's been very active as a board member, quilter, lay speaker, teacher, food preparer and server, vestment overseer, and choir member. She looked forward to holding services at the Kendricktown Methodist Church two to three times a month as part of her Lay Service.

Another group of friends Dorothy cherished were her "Town & Country" group. Good friends who are retired and enjoy getting together.

Dorothy has received many additional accolades. In 1975, she was Missouri's Mother of the Year and received dual recognition from the state representatives, senate and Governor Kit Bond.

In 1990-91 she was named Citizen of the Year by the Carthage Lions Club. In 1997, she was awarded the Women of Distinction Award by the Ozark Area Girl Scout Council and in 2001 was named Grand Marshall of the Maple Leaf Parade.



Dale and Gail Lawrence are caring and loving people with truly big hearts. They genuinely care about others and consistently go above and beyond whenever they see a need. Each year, they attend numerous parades, schools, businesses, and community events as Mr. and Mrs. Claus, touching the lives of well over a thousand children annually.

They also plant a beautiful garden every year. Gardening is something they truly enjoy, and they do an outstanding job keeping it healthy and attractive. Much of what they grow is generously shared with friends, neighbors, and people in need.

Gail is a retired schoolteacher, and each year during the first week of school, Dale and Gail deliver Sonic drinks to the teachers at Avilla as a small gesture of appreciation for all they do.

Dale and Gail love animals and operate a small herd of cows. If you could be an animal, you'd want to be one of theirs. If only all animals could be as spoiled as Dottie!



They are also always willing to help neighbors by caring for animals when someone is sick or away on vacation.

They are active members of their church, serve on the extension council, and participate on several committees.

Dale and Gail are always there when help is needed—whether you ask or they simply notice someone could use a hand. They are truly kind, caring, and all-around good people.

County Highlights

Missouri Farm Family

Tyler and Rachelle Rush and family of Jasper were among the families honored during the 68th annual Missouri Farm Family Day, August 11 at the Missouri State Fair.

The Rush family was selected as the Jasper County Missouri Farm Family by University of Missouri Extension in Jasper County and the local Farm Bureau. The family includes Ella, Emrie, Emelia and Endie.

Each year, the fair sets aside a day to recognize farm families from across the state that are active in their communities, involved in agriculture, and/or participate in local outreach and extension programs such as 4-H or FFA.

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.

The event showcases the impact that Missouri farm families have on the economy and heritage of the state. These families are involved in agriculture activities in their communities and are active participants in local outreach and extension. As the premier showcase for Missouri agriculture, the Missouri State Fair is most certainly the appropriate place to celebrate these families.



Pictured back row left to right: Jamie Johansen, Missouri State Fair Commissioner; Todd Hayes, Vice President, Missouri Farm Bureau; Jason Moore, Director Missouri State Fair; Byron Roach, Missouri State Fair Commissioner; Davin Althoff, Chief Administrative Officer, Missouri Farm Bureau; Rob Kallenbach, Associate Dean of Extension and Senior Program Director of Agriculture & Environment; middle row: Bailey Schneider, 2025 Missouri State Fair Queen; Rachelle Rush; Tyler Rush; Governor Mike Kehoe; Lisa Washburn, Associate Vice Chancellor for MU Extension and Engagement; and front row: Emrie, Emelia and Ella Rush



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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 Agriculture programs give youth hands-on experiences in areas such as animal science, veterinary science, plant science, and agronomy. Members explore the biology, care, and management of animals and crops while developing problem-solving, critical thinking, and leadership skills.

Youth can also put their knowledge into practice through statewide competitions, including **Livestock Judging**, **Meat Judging**, **Hippology**, the **Missouri 4-H Equine Tour** and more. These experiences help participants apply what they've learned, gain confidence, and prepare for future careers in agriculture and related fields.



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.

Legend



Agricultural Growth & Stewardship



Economic Opportunity



Educational Access & Excellence



Health & Well-Being

Local Impact

Herding Heros Livestock Show

The 10th Annual Herding Heroes Livestock Show saw an excellent turnout at the Jasper County Youth Fair. Herding Heroes is an inclusive livestock show designed for individuals with special needs, providing a meaningful and supportive experience for all involved.

Each participant was paired with a buddy—either a 4-H or FFA member—and had the opportunity to show their choice of a pig, goat, sheep, or rabbit. This year's event included 30 participants and was made possible through the dedication of 42 volunteers.



Trenton showing a rabbit with his buddy Brooklyn



Stream Team members with some of the trash collected on Turkey Creek.



Pleasant Valley 4-H keeping the fair ground beautiful



Avilla 4-H Club ringing the bell for Salvation Army

Jasper County 4-H is one of the supported agencies of the **Carthage Area United Way**.



Service to Communities Recognition Award

One meaningful way families experience 4-H together is through community service learning, which helps youth better understand their communities while practicing good citizenship. Teaching young people the value of generosity through volunteerism builds lifelong skills and character.

The Pleasant Valley Pioneers 4-H Club and Avilla 4-H Club exemplified these values through their outstanding service efforts. Pleasant Valley Pioneers received the Purple Award, while Avilla 4-H received the White Award. Together, these clubs contributed more than 1,000 hours of community service to their communities.

Profiles and stories



Jasper County Youth Fair

A total of 337 youth, ages 5–21, participated in the Jasper County Youth Fair held July 6–14 in Carthage, Mo. The fair featured 1,161 animal and non-animal exhibits, showcasing the dedication, skills, and hard work of local 4-H and FFA members.

Eighty youth qualified for the fair's market sale with meat animals, including steers, hogs, lambs, meat goats, broilers, turkeys, and rabbits. Strong community support was demonstrated through the purchase of market animals and generous "add-on" contributions from local businesses and individuals, reinforcing the community's commitment to youth development and agricultural education.

Friend of 4-H Award

The Friend of 4-H Award recognizes an individual or organization whose support and contributions have made a meaningful impact on the local 4-H program. This year's Friend of 4-H Award was presented to the Carthage Area United Way in recognition of their continued commitment to youth development. Executive Director Kim Basinger was in attendance to accept the award on behalf of the organization.

Ozark Empire Fair (OEF) and Missouri State Fair

Ninety-four Jasper County 4-H members qualified a total of 281 projects for exhibition at the Ozark Empire Fair. Their hard work and dedication were recognized with 32 Grand and Reserve Champion ribbons, including one Overall Grand Champion award.

At the Missouri State Fair, 73 Jasper County 4-H members showcased 109 exhibits in the 4-H building. In addition, several members represented the county in livestock shows, further highlighting the strong presence and accomplishments of Jasper County 4-H at the state level.



Jasper County

Missouri 4-H



Missouri 4-H Hall of Fame

The Missouri 4-H Hall of Fame honors individuals who have demonstrated exceptional service and long-standing dedication to the 4-H program. Inductees are formally recognized and presented with a plaque during the Missouri State Fair.

This year, Jasper County's Missouri 4-H Hall of Fame inductee was Connie Cooper (pictured in center), recognized for her outstanding contributions and commitment to 4-H.

State Shooting Sports

Missouri 4-H Shooting Sports contests bring together youth from across the state to compete in a variety of disciplines, including archery, .22 rifle, air rifle, sporting clays, skeet, and trap. Jasper County 4-H members represented the county with strong participation and notable achievements across multiple divisions.

In the **Senior Division**, Kelton Moll competed in sporting clays and trap singles, while Grant Egger participated in trap singles, sporting clays, and skeet singles. Annysia Flores competed in .22 rifle open. In the **Intermediate Division**, Jack Anibal competed in sporting clays, trap singles earning a 9th place finish—and skeet singles. In the **Junior Division**, several members earned top placements: Ellie Chadd placed 4th in Archery 300 Compound Fingers; Ruby Chadd placed 8th in Air Rifle Aperture Sights; Abigail Cochran placed 8th in Archery 300 Recurve Traditional; Noelle Cochran earned 2nd place in Archery Compound Fingers; and Gideon Lewis earned 1st place in .22 Rifle Open and competed in Archery 300 Compound Release.



State 4-H Foundation Scholarship

State 4-H Foundation Scholarships are available to high school seniors and current college students who are current or former 4-H members. Each year, more than 60 scholarships are awarded, with amounts ranging from \$500 to \$2,500. A single application allows applicants to be considered for all available scholarships. This year, Tannah Cassatt was selected as the recipient of the Jasper County 4-H Scholarship.

State Meats Judging

The 4-H State Meats Judging Contest held on Saturday, February 15, in Columbia, Mo. drew 60 competing 4-H members from across the state. The contest provided participants with valuable opportunities to develop and refine their judging skills while exploring potential career and educational pathways within the agricultural industry.



The 2025 contest featured two age divisions: Junior (ages 8–13) and Senior (ages 14–18). Jasper County was well represented with a senior team consisting of Austin Pope, Kelton Moll, Faith Calvin, and Aiden Cunningham earning an outstanding 2nd-place finish overall. Individually, Austin Pope placed 3rd, and Faith Calvin placed 5th, highlighting the strong preparation and dedication of the team. Jasper County also had two junior individual participants, Malachi Siebert and Jackson Anibal, with Jackson Anibal earning an impressive 8th-place finish.



They develop teamwork, effective communication, analytical thinking, and confidence in defending their decisions.

This year's junior team consisted of Brooklyn Pope, Cooper Stratton, Danny Cassatt, and Baylee Boothe. The team earned a 5th place overall finish, with Cooper Stratton placing 9th individually. Zannah Grigg represented Jasper County as the senior competitor.

State Livestock Judging

Livestock evaluation is an exciting and thought-provoking experience that challenges participants to critically analyze animals and compare them to the ideal. The purpose of livestock judging is not only to place animals accurately, but also to effectively communicate and defend those decisions through oral reasons. These two components—animal placement and oral justification—form the foundation of livestock judging.

Through this process, participants gain much more than technical judging skills.

4-H Day at the Capitol

On March 26, nearly 900 Missouri 4-H members, volunteers, parents, and staff gathered in Jefferson City for 4-H Day at the Capitol—an inspiring day focused on civic engagement, leadership, and advocacy.

Missouri Governor Mike Kehoe and First Lady Claudia Kehoe welcomed the group and recognized the important role 4-H plays in developing confident, capable young leaders across the state. Throughout the day, 4-H members met with state representatives and senators to share their personal experiences and highlight the value of University of Missouri Extension's 4-H programs in preparing youth with skills for life and future careers.

Jasper County was well represented, with 20 members and volunteers participating in this meaningful experience.



Student Nutrition Advisory Council (SNAC)

The Student Nutrition Advisory Council (SNAC) clubs were offered in a variety of settings, including before school, during school, after school, and within community programs. These clubs empower youth to build knowledge and skills related to nutrition and physical fitness. Participants take on leadership roles as healthy living ambassadors by designing and carrying out projects that promote nutrition education and encourage active lifestyles in their schools and communities.



SNAC clubs—including Avilla Chunky Monkeys at Avilla Elementary, Jasper 7th Grade Eagles Club, Jasper 8th Grade Eagles Club, and the Juvenile Justice Center Nutty Buddies—had fun learning about healthy eating habits and trying new exercises. Youth also gained hands-on experience preparing nutritious recipes such as deviled eggs, breakfast bars, banana wraps, taco bowls, and more. In total, 71 youth successfully completed the SNAC program.

Embryology

The embryology project is a hands-on educational experience that allows youth to incubate fertilized chicken eggs and observe the stages of life and embryonic development firsthand. Participants explored the science behind development by dissecting a fertile egg and witnessing the exciting process of chicks hatching. This year, 114 youth took part in the embryology project, gaining meaningful, real-world learning experiences in animal science and biology.



State Speech Contest

The State 4-H Speech Contest allows youth to compete in a communication category of their choice alongside peers within their age division. The Public Speaking Contest is divided into five categories—Prepared, Extemporaneous, Technology Assisted, Interpretation, and Business Pitch—with each category offered at three age levels: junior, intermediate and senior.

Participants demonstrate their communication, critical thinking, and presentation skills while addressing a variety of topics. Jasper County was proudly represented by Faith Calvin, who earned 1st place in the Prepared Speaking category and was named 1st

Overall for her speech on Alpha Gal. As a result of her success at the state level, Faith qualified to advance to the **Western National Roundup** in Denver, Colorado, where she placed an impressive 7th overall.



State Poultry Day

State 4-H Poultry Day was held on June 14 on the University of Missouri campus. The event featured a variety of competitions, including poultry judging, quiz bowl, egg demonstration, photo contest, and dozen egg contest.

State Poultry Day provides youth with hands-on learning opportunities in both cutting-edge industry practices and foundational poultry knowledge to support success in their poultry projects. Participants developed skills in grading eggs and poultry carcasses, identifying poultry cuts, and selecting quality live poultry. In addition to skill development, members had the opportunity to network with other youth from across the state who share similar interests in poultry science.

Jasper County participants achieved notable success, with Cooper Stratton earning 1st place overall in the junior division and Ellie Stratton placing 9th in the 8-10 junior division.



Camp Smokey

Southwest Regional 4-H staff host Camp Smokey, a regional 4-H camp held at Camp Smokey in Roaring River State Park. Each year, three camp sessions are offered to 4-H members.

Campers have the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of activities, including arts and crafts, trout fishing, and treasure hunts. These experiences encourage youth to try new activities, build friendships, develop independence, and most importantly, have fun in a supportive camp environment. This year, 13 Jasper County 4-H members attended all three camp sessions, demonstrating strong engagement and enthusiasm for the camp experience.





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Agriculture and Environment



The Missouri Master Naturalist program is a community-based initiative for adults, supported by the Missouri Department of Conservation and MU Extension. It aims to create a group of knowledgeable volunteers who can offer education, outreach and service for the responsible management of natural resources in Missouri communities.

Eric Work, Heroes to Hives participant

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



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

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 garden



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



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



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

Legend



Agricultural Growth & Stewardship



Economic Opportunity



Educational Access & Excellence



Health & Well-Being

Agriculture and Environment

Profiles and stories

Commercial Horticulture Team

Horticulture specialists from across the state collaborate to provide educational resources available to all Missouri residents. One of which is the Commercial Horticulture Newsletter. This free monthly subscription features videos and short articles, focused on timely topics and directed towards Missouri's fruit and vegetable farmers. Other educational resources include webinar series. In April of 2025, the commercial horticulture team offered the "Summer Crop Success Series," a four-class series focused on commercial production of several types of vegetables.



Heroes to Hives

A group of veterans in Southwest Missouri participated in the Heroes to Hives monthly field days held in Lawrence County. Attendance at each field day was typically between six and 12 attendees. Caleb O'Neal and Matthew Huchteman are the coordinators of this program for the Southwest Missouri region. The Heroes to Hives program is designed to bring high-level education to local veterans on all aspects of beekeeping, apitherapy, honey production, value-added beekeeping goods marketing, and business model development. The project also provides valuable networking opportunities for attendees and continued educational opportunities for those enrolled in the program.

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MATHEW HUCHTEMAN
HORTICULTURE FIELD SPECIALIST
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI EXTENSION

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MU Extension Integrated Pest Management

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5 Share Ask ...

Watermelon Workshop

In July of 2025, producers from across the southwest region gathered at the Southwest Research, Extension, and Education Center in Mt. Vernon, Mo. for the inaugural SWMO Watermelon Workshop. Twenty attendees enjoyed a one-hour presentation by Matthew Huchteman on commercial watermelon production, a tour of watermelon demonstration plots, and a taste test of four early varieties. Plots demonstrated differences in growth, yield and pest pressure for watermelon and cantaloupe grown with and without low tunnels.



Agriculture and Environment

Profiles and stories



Career Exploration Day and Career Development Event (CDE) Workshops

High school ag students from across the southwest region gathered at the Southwest Research, Extension and Education Center for events including the Future Farmers of America CDE Workshop in March and Career Exploration Day in September. Students at the CDE workshop had the opportunity to practice contests (i.e. agronomy, soils, entomology) organized by extension specialists in the region. Specialists provided students with practical instruction relevant to their chosen contest. Extension specialists and ag professionals around the state connected with over 1,500 high school ag students at career exploration day. Students learned about a great diversity of careers and current agricultural topics through engaging presentations.



Extension Implementation Program

MU Extension, in partnership with Alianzas (University of Missouri) and Vision Carthage, offered two workshops in Carthage, Mo. focused on garlic production, tomato / pepper production, and integrated pest management. These workshops were part of a grant funded project called the Extension Implementation Program. The goal of this project is to conduct a needs assessment for both Hispanic and Amish / Mennonite growers to determine how extension programs can be modified to reach underserved communities. Workshops in Carthage provided technical education, but also served as a meeting place, allowing the Hispanic community to connect with local extension professionals and complete a formal needs assessment survey.

Ozark Gateway Master Gardener

Profiles and Stories

Number of Volunteers – 15

Number of Volunteer Hours – 2,051

Dollar Value of Volunteer Hours - \$71,354.29

(*[Independent Sector](#) at \$34.79/hour)

Number of New Volunteers – 1

Number of Continuing Education Hours – 169

Pounds of Produce Donated – 4,060

Value of Pounds of Produce Donated -

\$7,835.80

(*[Feeding America](#) at \$1.93/pound)



CHAPTER PROJECTS

- **Crosslines Ministries in Joplin** – Charles Pyle, along with many other Ozark Gateway Master Gardeners (OGMG), volunteers to manage the garden at Joplin Crosslines. This garden yielded 4,060 pounds of produce in 2025, all of which was donated to the Crosslines food pantry.
- **Children's Garden at Webb City Farmers Market** – Nancy Beckwith, along with other Ozark Gateway Master Gardeners, offers hands on learning for children through the children's garden at the Webb City Farmers market.
- **Shoal Creek Demonstration Garden** – Lee Rodriguez oversees the OMG pollinator demonstration garden at the Shoal Creek Conservation Education area in Joplin, Mo. This space serves to educate guests about Missouri's native plants and associated pollinators.
- **Empire Market** – Debbie Fedie and Eric Osen, along with other Master Gardener volunteers, provide educational opportunities at Empire Market, Joplin, Mo. throughout the year. Volunteers also work to maintain a demonstration garden at the market, allowing for hands on garden education.
- **Plant Sale** – The annual plant sale fundraiser was held in May at the Crosslines garden in Joplin, Mo. Many Master Gardeners volunteer to organize this event and raise plants to sell. This event allows Master Gardeners to connect with community members. The 2025 plant sale included several educational presentations on gardening topics

CHAPTER EDUCATION

- **Monthly Meetings** – 8 out of the 11 chapter meetings in 2025 included educational presentations and / or field trips.

Ozark Gateway Master Gardener

Profiles and Stories



Tommy Eaves oversees an information booth at the local garden center



Ron Wood preparing the Crosslines site for the Ozark Gateway Master Gardeners (OGMG) Plant sale

Touring the peony beds at the Botanical Center at Nathanael Greene Park, Springfield, Mo.



Ozark Gateway Master Gardener

Profiles and Stories



Group tour of the MU Southwest Research, Extension and Education Center in Mt. Vernon, Mo. guided by Professor Andy Thomas



Awards ceremony at the Ozark Gateway Master Gardener's annual recognition dinner



Group tour at LuMae Floriculture in Oronogo, Mo.

Ozark Gateway Master Gardener

Profiles and Stories



Plant dig in preparation for the Ozark Gateway Master Gardener Plant Sale



Informational booth at the Shoal Creek Conservation Education Center pollinator garden, Joplin, Mo.



“Goats in the Garden” event at the Empire Market Garden, Joplin, Mo.

Ozark Gateway Master Gardener

Profiles and stories



**Empire Farmers Market
Kids in the Garden**



Ozark Gateway Master Gardener

Profiles and stories



South Middle School Interact Club was started four years ago as a Rotary Club project. Members worked with Ozark Gateway Master Gardener Eric Osen harvesting sunflowers and drilling holes in wooden blocks to make homes for native solitary nesting bees. Approximately 40 boxes were made to take and paint with elementary kids moving to middle school next year.

Webb City Farmers Market

Master Gardener Nancy Beckwith teaching young gardeners at the Webb City Farmers Market youth garden.



Ozark Gateway Master Gardener

Profiles and stories



Thousands of seeds were distributed to over 650 persons at **National Seed Swap Day** held at Ozark Nursery in Joplin, Mo. Ozark Gateway Master Gardeners (OGMG) partnered with Chert Glades Chapter of Missouri Master Naturalists, Joplin Sheltered Workshop and Lincoln University to distribute seed packets.



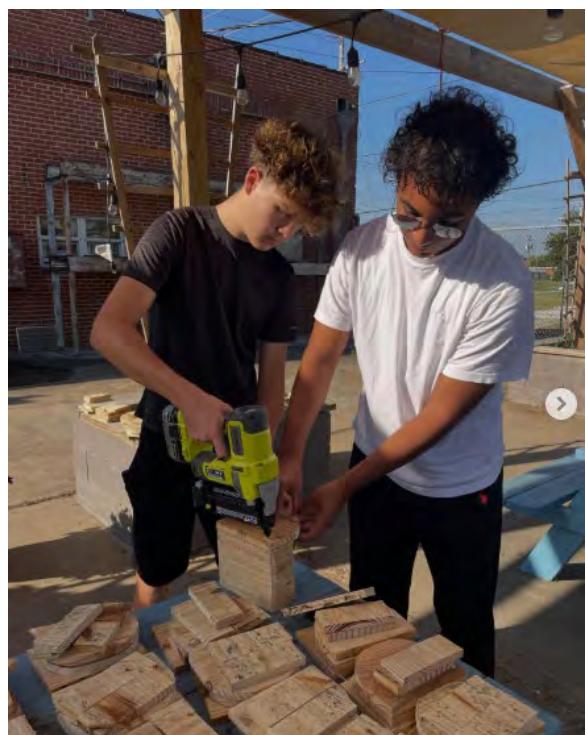
Ozark Gateway Master Gardener



The Third Annual **Plant Give-Away** at Crosslines, Joplin, Mo. and the Joplin Public Library saw approximately 50 flats of vegetables and herbs donated by the Rockyard, Joplin, Mo. distributed to around 500 area gardeners.

Youth Volunteer Corps (YVC), Joplin partners with Master Gardeners at Empire Market in September, refurbishing picnic tables and building 30 Hobbit Houses as a free kid's activity.

YVC ended the summer camp projects building and preparing a raised garden bed.



Chert Glades Master Naturalist Chapter

In 2025, the Chert Glades chapter of the Missouri Master Naturalists had 44 active members. Members had a total of 5,429 volunteer hours and 922 advanced training hours.

Chapter partners included Joplin Empire Market, Atwoods Ranch and Homegoods, George Washington Carver National Monument, Wildcat Glades Nature Group, Prairie State Park, Joplin Parks, Cardinal Valley Habitat Restoration Project, Missouri Stream Team, DarkSky Missouri, Missouri Prairie Foundation, Carthage Public Library, and Webb City Public Library.

Monthly meetings for the Chert Glades Chapter were in-person, with an average of 15 participants per meeting. Meetings featured a business meeting portion along with a variety of advanced training presentations that were either in-person or via Zoom. The chapter did not have a core training class for new members this year, we plan to have one next year.

Highlights of the year include:

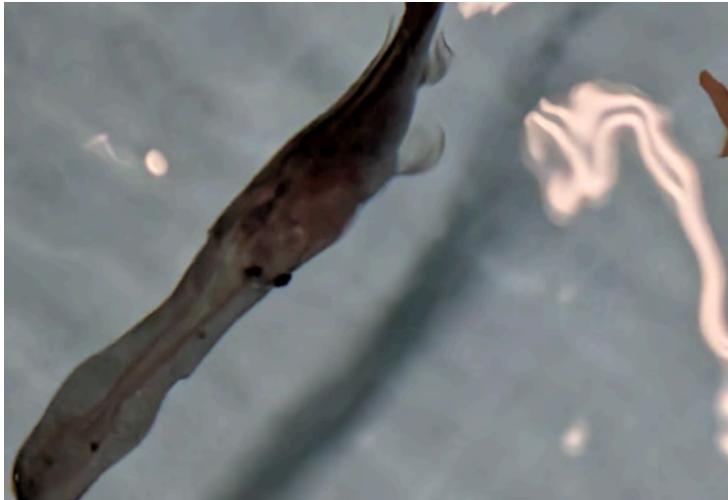
- Members supplied 2,529 packets of native plant seeds and shared native landscaping information at National Seed Swap day at the Joplin Empire Market.
- Members partnered with Carthage Public Library through the Vision Carthage program giving an introduction to native plant landscaping in the spring. The program was so successful we were asked to come again in the fall.

Jeff Cantrall along with chapter members Julie Womack, Sara and Shayla Eimer educated visitors to George Washington Carver Day on 7/12/2025 at George Washington Carver National Monument, Diamond, MO about bear awareness mussels for measurement.



Chert Glades Master Naturalist Chapter

Profiles and stories



Chert Glades Master Naturalist Chapter member Scott Butler takes a photo of a baby paddlefish while visiting the Neosho National Fish Hatchery during a chapter fieldtrip for advanced training August 11, 2025.



Scott Butler helps light a prescribed burn at one of the Missouri Prairie Foundation's remnant prairie properties January 29, 2025.

Chert Glades Master Naturalists Chapter members informational booth at Joplin Empire Market Bees and Blossoms event on May 24, 2025. Members educated the public on native bees and other pollinators.



Agriculture and Environment

Local Impact



There were 94 participants attending the **100th Lawrence County Soils and Crops Conference** in January, including three Jasper County residents. Sessions featured MU Specialists Ian McGregor on building drought-resilient forage systems, Tim Schnakenberg on practical approaches to weed and brush control in pastures, and Caleb O'Neal on why the soil remains a farm's most valuable investment. Drought has been a consistent concern for farmers in Southwest Missouri, so specialists developed talks to equip producers with actionable knowledge that can improve the drought resilience of their farms, which in turn strengthens the local economy and food production system.



In collaboration with the Missouri Forage and Grassland Council a **Grassfed Beef Production Workshop** was offered by MU Field Specialist in Plant Science Caleb O'Neal in March. There were 51 attendees including two from Jasper County. Grassfed beef is a specialty product that can be higher than conventionally raised beef in nutrient density and thus can command a higher price for the product. This program was designed to educate and equip farmers to produce, market, and successfully sell grassfed beef direct-to-consumer, which has greater profit margins than simply taking animals to the stockyards.



Livestock Specialists partnered with seven veterinarians in Southwest Missouri to host the **Bull Soundness Exam Days** 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.

Jasper County

Agriculture and Environment

Local Impact

A new program was developed by MU Extension personnel in 2020 **Utilizing Drones in Missouri**

Agriculture. The first drone school attracted 35 attendees including three Jasper County residents and was coordinated by MU Extension Specialist Caleb O'Neal. In the first year of this program, O'Neal delivered in-person drone education programming in 15 different counties, to more than 1,600 Missouri residents. The intent of these programmatic efforts is to demonstrate the current potential uses for drone technologies in agricultural production, with a strong emphasis in introducing young farmers to alternative business models that enable them to remain in agriculture and carry on their family legacy of farming in Missouri.



The Southwest Research, Extension and Education Center (SW-REEC) Field Day attracted approximately 2,000 Missourians from the southwest portion of the state, including dozens of Jasper County residents. Attendees learn about current agricultural research, precision agriculture technology, natural resource management, agricultural business opportunities, and various ag-centric topics at this annual event. Each station sees roughly 300-400 visitors through the course of the program.

There were 75 producers who attended the **2nd Annual Organics in the Ozarks Field Day** including four Jasper County residents in July. This event was organized by MU Specialist Caleb O'Neal in collaboration with the Missouri Organic Association. This program was designed to provide network opportunities and practical education for producers who are interested in organic crop and fruit/vegetable production methods. There is currently more demand than supply for commodities like organic soybeans in the U.S. and the price for such goods are often multiple times as valuable as conventional commodities. This program is tailored to support organic commodity production in the state and strengthen local markets.



Agriculture and Environment

Local Impact

Farm Visits and County Office Interactions

University of Missouri Field Specialists in Agronomy, Dairy, Livestock, Horticulture and Ag Business offer local farmers and producers individualized education via in-person interaction, phone calls, email, and farm visits to answer agricultural related questions. This education helps farmers and producers make important management decisions for their farms and businesses and helps improve the overall management of Missouri's important natural resources and agriculture production.



Farm visit in Jasper County

Soil Testing and Plant Testing

University of Missouri County Extension offices offer soil testing and plant testing via the soil testing lab and plant disease diagnostic lab in Columbia, Mo. for Missouri landowners, farmers, gardeners, commercial and agricultural producers. The results from soil tests give producers insight into the pH level, available phosphorus, potassium, calcium and magnesium; organic matter; acidity and cation exchange of their soil. Soil reports also offer educational advice and recommendations from the soil lab and local extension specialists to help producers make important agricultural decisions regarding soil fertilization for intended crop fields, pastures, lawns and gardens. In 2025, around 245 soil tests were submitted through the Jasper County office.



Soil Sample

11th Annual Joplin FFA Ag Expo

MU extension specialists were invited to discuss information about agricultural education and work opportunities in agriculture. MU Extension Specialists Micah Doubledee, Amy Patillo, and Reagan Bluel hosted booths to interact with students to discuss college opportunities, careers in agriculture and agricultural related information. Micah Doubledee discussed agronomy and plant disease information, Reagan Bluel discussed ruminant nutrition and Amy Patillo discussed college and career advice. Interacting with youth helps encourage the next generation to seek agriculture education and careers in agriculture.



MU Extension booth at Joplin FFA Ag Expo

Agriculture and Environment

Local Impact

Crop Scouting Program

MU Field Specialist in Agronomy Micah Doubledee continued the weekly crop scouting program which informs producers of pest and disease threats during the growing season by scouting fields in Barton, Jasper and Dade Counties. Participants pay \$40 dollars a year to join the program to have their fields scouted. A three-page report is emailed to participants discussing scouting observations, environmental issues, weed issues, nutrient deficiencies, plant diseases, and pests, along with links to resource and upcoming Ag events. In 2025, 18 producers actively participated in the program. Three participated from Jasper County.



Dectes stem borer damage on soybean

Private Pesticide Applicator Training

University of Missouri Extension provides initial pesticide applicator training and recertification of Missouri's agricultural producers. This training is for producers wanting to purchase and apply restricted-use pesticides. Private Pesticide Applicator Training program is a vital educational program that focuses on providing knowledge of the safe and proper use of agricultural pesticides as well as the legal requirements associated with application. During 2025, MU Specialists Micah Doubledee and Caleb O'Neal along with other agronomists provided in-person and online classes. A total of 20 people from Jasper County participated in the Private Pesticide Applicator Training program.



Private Pesticide Applicator training

Non-certified Restricted Use Pesticide Applicator Training (NRUP)

University of Missouri Extension provides initial pesticide applicator training to individuals seeking a Non-certified Restricted Use Pesticide Applicator license who want to be able to apply restricted-use pesticides. This training program provides education on the safe and proper use of pesticides as well as the legal requirements associated with application. MU Field Specialists in Agronomy Micah Doubledee and Tim Schnakenberg taught NRUP training to 11 people in Carthage, Mo. in 2025.



Non-certified Pesticide Applicator Training

Agriculture and Environment

Local Impact



Micah Doubledee speaking at the Newton and McDonald County Grazing School



Tim Schnakenberg speaking at the Newton and McDonald County Grazing School

Newton and McDonald County Grazing School

University of Missouri Agricultural Field Specialists collaborate with Missouri Soil and Water Conservation District (MO SWCD), Missouri Forage and Grassland Council and Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to provide education on Management Intensive Grazing to livestock producers. Grazing school is three days of intense education to encourage effective management of both forage and livestock to help optimize profitability and better management of resources. Participants listen to numerous presentations by multiple speakers and visited local farms to practice pasture evaluation. Eighteen people were educated at the Management Intensive Grazing school held in Neosho, Mo. Five people attended from Jasper County.



The **Monett 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.

Agriculture and Environment

Agriculture Business & Policy



Practical Economic Insights for Agricultural Lenders

Lenders helped five Jasper County lenders interpret commodity trends, analyze farm financial stress indicators, and assess credit risk in agricultural loan portfolios. Attendees strengthened their ability to support producer financial resilience in a volatile economy.

Tri-County Livestock & Forage Conference

provided 28 Jasper County producers with research-based strategies to rebuild drought-stressed forage systems, evaluate the economic return of lime applications, and incorporate cover crop grazing. Participants gained practical tools to strengthen forage resilience and improve long-term grazing management.

Southwest Research, Extension and Education Center (SW-REEC)

Poultry Processing Demonstration

trained 61 Jasper County producers 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.



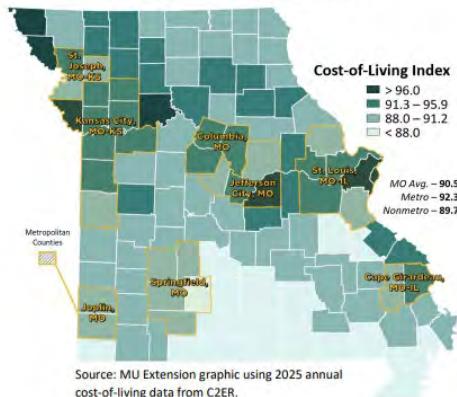


MU Extension **Serves MISSOURI and Delivers MIZZOU** through credible statewide programs

Business and Community



2025 Cost-of-Living Index



Source: MU Extension graphic using 2025 annual cost-of-living data from C2ER.



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 2025, MEI published 15 issues. The most popular MEIs, based on Facebook and LinkedIn impressions, was **Agribusiness Workforce, Tourism, Food Access, and cost of living/inflation**. Online resources were accessed over 6,500 times. Fifty-three percent of MEI newsletter recipients reported using information to help guide policy or decision-making in their work.



Legend



Agricultural Growth & Stewardship



Economic Opportunity



Educational Access & Excellence



Health & Well-Being

As of 2024, 50 Missouri businesses have been designated recovery friendly workplaces with 3,179 employees statewide.

The annual **Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities** conference is designed for stakeholders, economic developers, businesses, local government, educators and nonprofits interested in increasing their communities' potential for entrepreneurship. In 2025, the conference enjoyed breakout sessions held in the quaint storefronts located in Excelsior Springs, Mo. The conference delivers both tactical, ready-to-use frameworks paired with the inspiration and storytelling that build momentum and civic muscle.

The conference drew 164 attendees from 48 counties and four states, significantly increasing visitor spending while showcasing local businesses, venues, and cultural assets.

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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.

Business and Community

Lisa Robinson serves Jasper County as a Regional Economic Development (RED) Field Specialist. Robinson regularly collaborates with Field Specialists in Community Development and Workforce Development. Robinson serves on the statewide Nonprofit Technical Assistance Team (NPTA) and Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities (CEC) webinar team. She serves on the boards of the Webb City R7 Schools Foundation and Webb City Area Chamber of Commerce. She recently joined the National Digital Education Extension Team (NDEET) on the Economic Development Team.

Robinson worked on a statewide team working on a series of early childcare webinars and targeted community programs in Kansas City and Moberly. The team presented details of the work during Extension Engagement Week (EEW) in October. Robinson also presented with Dr. Amy Patillo on "Ready to Hire, Ready to Work: Investing in Partnerships to Drive Missouri's Workforce Forward," and a lightning talk, "Powering Missouri's Workforce and Regional Economic Growth," during EEW.

Robinson was privileged to co-author a Missouri Economy Indicators (MEI) brief, Volume 6, Issue 10: "Neurodivergence in the Workforce," on August 18, 2025. This MEI was accessed 65 times on the website and was featured in the Exceed newsletter with 106 unique openers. Requests for the research briefs are accepted throughout the year. This brief arose from a question during a May presentation.

Below: Members of the WC R7 Schools Foundation Board working an event. Robinson is currently serving as Vice-President of the organization.



Pictured left: Steven Shepelwich and Marissa Martinez from the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City (FED KC) with Sherri Rhuems, Executive Director of the Workforce Investment Board of Southwest Missouri and Robinson. The FED KC facilitated an employer roundtable in July for the upcoming Forward Together Workforce Summit.



Above: Forward Together Workforce Summit participants receive information on the breakout sessions.

The Forward Together Workforce Summit on September 26, 2025 was held in Joplin, Mo. Over 50 participated in the event. Workforce Development Specialist Dr. Amy Patillo joined Lisa Robinson on the planning committee with representatives from Crowder College, Joplin Regional Alliance for Health (JRAH), FED KC, Workforce Investment Board of Southwest Missouri, MOKAN Partnership, and Missouri Southern State University. 2026 Plans are underway with the committee.



Left: Lisa Robinson with Dr. Amy Patillo and Dr. Doug Swanson at Reimagining Your Workforce event.

Labor and Workforce Development

Jasper County

Business and Community

Profiles and Stories



Amy Patillo
Field Specialist in Labor and Workforce

MU Extension Regional Workforce Development in Southwest Missouri

MU Extension plays a pivotal and stabilizing role in advancing regional workforce development across Southwest Missouri by bringing together employers, educators, recovery advocates, and community organizations to address shared workforce challenges. Through its engagement in major regional efforts—such as serving on the planning committee for the Forward Joplin Workforce Summit and participating in the Crowder Disconnected Workers Workforce Conference—MU Extension helps ensure that workforce strategies are grounded in research, aligned with regional needs, and connected across county and state lines. These engagements allow MU Extension to elevate employer needs, strengthen cross-sector communication, and promote practical approaches that support individuals who have become disconnected from work. As a trusted intermediary, MU Extension provides the coordination, credibility, and relationship-building necessary to move regional initiatives forward. Its leadership helps communities create stronger pathways back into employment, expand the available talent pool, and build a more resilient workforce for Southwest Missouri.

Regional workforce development efforts in Southwest Missouri continue to grow stronger through collaboration, shared learning, and aligned strategies that address persistent hiring challenges. MU Extension plays a critical role in this work by strengthening cross-sector partnerships, supporting employers in expanding their talent pipelines, and connecting community organizations, recovery leaders, and workforce practitioners across the region.



Joplin Forward Workforce Summit Panelist



Workforce Strategies for a Thriving Region:
Strategies for Engaging Disconnected Populations

Labor and Workforce Development

Jasper County

Business and Community

Profiles and Stories



North Central Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Center, Impact Collaborative, Minneapolis, MN

Missouri Farm Stress team members Amy Patillo, Jendel Wolfe, and Director Karen Funkenbusch participated in the North Central Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Center Impact Collaborative to identify opportunities and barriers to expanding telehealth services for veterans, farmers, and ranchers in Missouri. Through this work, the team helped strengthen access to no-cost telehealth therapy provided by licensed clinicians to Missourians working in agriculture. Since its launch in 2023, the program has more than doubled its telehealth services and counseling hours, demonstrating growing need and significant progress in supporting the mental health and well-being of Missouri's agricultural community.



Second-Chance Hiring Speaking Engagements
KOLR- 10 AgrAbility Arthritis and Gardening

MU Extension's Missouri AgrAbility Program was featured on KOLR-10 to share practical strategies that help individuals with arthritis continue gardening safely and comfortably. The segment highlighted tools, adaptations, and body-mechanics techniques that reduce pain, prevent strain, and support long-term participation in gardening activities. By providing education on pre-planning garden tasks, selecting arthritis-friendly tools, preparing the body for physical activity, and managing discomfort, Missouri AgrAbility is helping Missourians maintain both their health and their quality of life while enjoying a meaningful and beneficial pastime.

Workforce development is essential for strengthening the resilience of Missouri's agricultural communities. Farm and Ranch stress programs and AgrAbility services support farmers, ranchers, and agricultural workers by addressing the physical, behavioral, and economic challenges that directly affect their ability to work safely and sustainably. By expanding access to training, adaptive tools, mental health resources, and problem-solving support, workforce development helps producers remain healthy, productive, and engaged in their operations. These efforts reduce turnover, prevent injuries, and preserve the long-term viability of family farms and rural economies.

Labor and Workforce Development

Jasper County

Business and Community

Profiles and Stories



Barry-Lawrence County Ag Resource Fair and Disability Expo

The Barry–Lawrence Counties Community Resource Fair & Disability Expo welcomed 105 families, caregivers, community members, and service providers on September 25, 2025, at the Southwest Research, Extension and Education Center in Mt. Vernon, Mo. More than 50 organizations participated, offering a wide range of services and support for individuals with disabilities and their families across Southwest Missouri. The event was made possible through the partnership of University of Missouri Extension, Missouri AgrAbility, the Lawrence County Board for the Developmentally Disabled, the Coalition of Charities, and local collaborators. Attendees praised the event's organization, the quality and variety of information provided, the excellent facility, and the inspiring performances by Champion Athletes and the Art Creative Dancers.

The Recovery Leaders Network, Connection, and Education program united 27 sober living leaders and community partners from Barry, Lawrence, Newton, Jasper, and McDonald Counties to strengthen relationships, share resources, and align support strategies. Participants reported deeper connection, increased collaboration, and renewed commitment to creating safe, stable, and recovery-supportive environments across Southwest Missouri.



Recovery Leaders Network, Connect, and Educate program

Business and Community

Profiles and Stories

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, Mo. and Springfield, Mo. and online. The schools were designed for those who prepare taxes including enrolled agents, tax preparers, Certified Public Accountants (CPA), 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, Internal Revenue Service (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 Certified Financial Planner (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 Continuing Professional Education (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, field specialist in agricultural business, 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 389 people, which was an 11 percent increase from 2024. Three from Jasper County participated.



Jasper County

Business and Community

Missouri Small Business Development Center (SBDC)

The Missouri SBDC at Missouri Southern State University (MSSU) provides support to Jasper County entrepreneurs and small business owners through 1:1 assistance and training. Over the course of 2025, SBDC office staff met with clients to discuss a wide range of topics including:

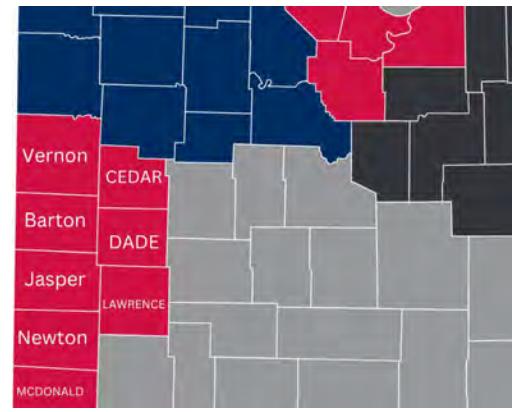
- Starting a business
- Cash flow management
- Business loan refinance and expansion
- Business relocation
- Financial planning
- Marketing and social media strategy
- Purchasing a business
- Childcare grant application assistance
- International expansion opportunities
- Technology commercialization
- Experiential projects linking MSSU students and business owners

Through leveraging regional partnerships, SBDC staff offered the following:

- Innovate SOMO
- Early-Stage Boot Camp
- Government contracting assistance
- Identification of grant opportunities effecting businesses due to imports

KEY OUTCOMES

- ✓ **237** Business owners received multiple 1:1 consulting sessions regarding their small businesses
- ✓ **7** New businesses started
- ✓ **21** New jobs created
- ✓ **1,857** Jobs retained
- ✓ **63** Government contracts awarded to small businesses in Jasper County
- ✓ **1,055** Training event attendees



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

Learn more about the latest programs and training

sbdc@mssu.edu

417-625-3128

www.mssutraining.com

REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

\$4,106,377

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

\$603,340

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

\$5,083,509

Capitalization secured through the assistance of the SBDC



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

Continuing Education



MU Continuing Education for Health Professions (CEHP) provides evidenced-based, relevant and responsive learning activities designed to narrow professional practice gaps with respect to knowledge, competence, and performance of the healthcare team. A commitment to lifelong learning, in partnership with those we serve, contributes to excellence in practice and improved health outcomes.

**CEHP provided 169 LEARNING ACTIVITIES
which reached over 53,000 healthcare
professionals across all Missouri counties.**



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



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

Health and Human Sciences



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



Mental Health First Aid equips people to recognize and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use challenges.

Youth Mental Health First Aid is primarily designed for adults who regularly interact with young people (ages 12-17) facing mental health 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, over 1 MILLION ADULTS and 105,000 ADOLESCENTS suffer from MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES.*

*Missouri Department of Mental Health 2024 Status Report



Divorcing or separating parents encounter distinct challenges when living apart. **Focus on Kids** guides parents in fostering effective co-parenting strategies to support their children through this process.

“Understanding that divorce doesn’t ruin children, but parents can significantly influence positive outcomes through good communication, was invaluable.”

Legend



Agricultural Growth & Stewardship



Economic Opportunity



Educational Access & Excellence



Health & Well-Being

Health and Human Science

Profiles and stories



At the end of May, Amy McNary, MU nutrition program associate (NPA), planted a container garden at The Eagles Nest Preschool in Jasper, Mo. We started with four cherry tomato plants and four pepper plants and planted radishes around the tomatoes and peppers.

Each week, the children were taught a gardening lesson. Afterward, we checked on the garden and harvested any vegetables that were ready. During each lesson, we also sampled different fruits and vegetables. A few brave kids even tried fruits or vegetables they had never tasted before. We wrapped up our final class by making and enjoying a delicious fruit smoothie.

From June through October, the preschool staff and preschoolers took care of the garden. They were able to use the tomatoes and peppers in lunches for the children. It was wonderful to watch the garden grow alongside the kids and to see how excited they were. They truly enjoyed picking and eating the vegetables they helped grow.

Health and Human Science

Profiles and stories

NPAs held nutrition cooking classes at Webb City Library, North Joplin HeadStart Social, Carthage HeadStart Social, McCune Brooks Health Foundation and Missouri Southern State University (MSSU).

Participants attending all six classes earn a free small appliance. In 2025, around 30 small appliances were delivered in Jasper County.



Carthage Public Library iCook Class

Pictured: MU nutrition program associates (NPAs) educated participants on health and nutrition at the Carthage Public Library. This class brings parents and children together while cooking healthy food and doing physical activity.



Health and Human Science

Profiles and stories

Ava Smith, nutrition program associate (NPA) shares her success story:

"One of the most rewarding moments from my nutrition education work came from a parent who shared a surprising transformation in her daughter's eating habits. Her daughter had never liked peanut butter and often skipped breakfast entirely. But that changed after trying the oat balls we made during a session. To everyone's surprise, including her mom, she loved them! Despite her usual dislike for peanut butter, she enjoyed it as part of the oat balls, which combined wholesome oats, natural sweeteners, and nutritious add-ins. Since then, these frozen oat balls have become a regular part of their mornings. Breakfast, which was once a struggle, is now something she looks forward to every day. It's amazing how one simple, hands-on recipe could shift a child's perspective on food and help build a consistent, nutritious breakfast routine. Moments like these show how impactful small changes can be when kids are given the chance to explore healthy eating in a fun, accessible way."

The Fuel for Life program at Missouri Southern State University is a monthly class designed to engage students in hands-on learning about nutrition, cooking, and healthy lifestyle choices. The program is structured around a curriculum consisting of eight different lessons, with each lesson focusing on a specific aspect of nutrition and cooking techniques that promote well-being and energy.



Pictured above: Head Start class at Carl Junction Schools doing a hands-on activity that goes along with one of the six nutrition lessons. Reaching all sorts of ages, NPAs programmed from Pre-K to senior adults at Columbian Elementary, Sarcoxie Elementary, Carterville Elementary, Carl Junction Head Start, Jasper Elementary, and North Joplin Head Start. Adult classes were taught at Loving Grace and hosted at Crosslines in Joplin. Along with nutrition programming, NPAs assist people with filling out Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) applications.



Extension

University of Missouri

Nutrition program associates partnered with 4-H youth program associate in Jasper County to set up an information table for a YMCA Easter event in Carthage. An estimated 150 individuals attended.



