



UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI EXTENSION

Lawrence County 2025 Annual Report

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**SERVE MISSOURI.
DELIVER MIZZOU.**

MU Extension
University of Missouri

an equal opportunity/ADA institution

**VICE CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE**

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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



Karla Deaver
4-H Youth Development Specialist

Ian McGregor
Field Specialist in Livestock

Caleb O'Neal
Field Specialist in Plant Sciences

Allen Brandes
Extension Engagement Specialist

Janet Adams
Office Support

Other Staff Serving in 2025

Samantha Cypret (January - August)
Nutrition Program Associate

Council Members

Chairman
Vice-chairman
Secretary
Treasurer

Member
Member
Member
Member
Member
Member
Member
Member
Member
Member

Kristina Callison
Ellen Mason
Jody Erwin
Debbie Pankau

Doug Bowerman
Norma Clinton
William Hendrix
Carrie Howlett
Carter LaFon
Robert Pankau
Chris Prater
Karl Wilke
Tiffany Wilke



County executives

Bob Senninger, Presiding Commissioner

Chris Pratt, Eastern Commissioner

Brad Smith, Western Commissioner

County highlights 2025

Leaders Honor Roll Recipients



Presented with their leader honor roll certificates in 2025 were James Rees, Kristina Callison and Glenn Callison

State Fair Farm Family - 2025



Clint and Sharon Neely and their children
Kendall, Conner and Mason



Council Members

Kristina Callison, Chairman
Ellen Mason, Vice-chairman
Jody Erwin, Secretary
Debbie Pankau, Treasurer
Doug Bowerman
Norma Clinton
William Hendrix
Carrie Howlett
Carter laFon
Robert Pankau
Chris Prater
Karl Wilke
Tiffany Wilke

Council Serving At Project Rise



County executives

Bob Senninger, Presiding Commissioner
Chris Pratt, Eastern Commissioner
Brad Smith, Western Commissioner

BUDGET AND MORE

Appropriations budget

Income	
County Appropriations	<u>49,000.00</u>
Total Income	49,000.00
Expenses	
Salaries/Benefits	40,933.91
Travel	6,576.00
Telephone	1,527.54
Office Supplies/Service	310.22
Rent/Lease Space	188.00
Insurance	100.00
Miscellaneous	480.00
Election Expense	<u>69.81</u>
Total Expenses	50,185.48

Lawrence County partners

Alliance For Grassland Renewal
Barry-Lawrence Regional Library
Central Elementary (Miller R-II)
City of Aurora
Farm Bureau
Goswick Ag Services
Joplin Regional Stockyards
Lawrence County Commissioners
Mid-Missouri Bank
Miller Christian Service Center
Missouri Forage and Grassland Council
Monett Chamber of Commerce
Mount Vernon Chamber of Commerce
Mount Vernon Elementary
Old Missouri Bank
Ozark Electric Cooperative
Pate Early Childhood Center
Saint Susanne Catholic Church
Southwest Missouri Cattlemen's Association
Southwest Research, Extension & Education Center

Return on investment

University System	154,000.00
Donations	700.00
Program Revenue	1,987.00

MU Extension is a unique funding partnership.

Extension funding is a three-way partnership of federal, state and county government. Federal and state money, through the University of Missouri system, pay professional staff salaries, training costs, computers and communication equipment. County funds support the local office, secretarial and youth assistant salaries, staff mileage and council expenses.

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



Local support

Did you know you can donate directly to Lawrence County Extension with a gift to be used immediately or as an endowment contribution for long term efforts. Monies put into the endowment are left forever to earn interest with the county office benefiting each year. You can also direct your donation to a specific program such as 4-H or Master Gardeners.

UM SYSTEM COUNTY IMPACTS

MU Extension in Lawrence County Community Impact Report

This report offers a detailed overview of how MU Extension positively impacts Lawrence County, showcasing the meaningful ways local engagement supports residents. It includes data on the number of students, employees, retirees and alumni affiliated with the University of Missouri System, along with the healthcare and extension services provided over the past year.

In addition, the report highlights the broader contributions of the UM System across Missouri in key areas such as education, research, healthcare, economic development and public service. It features metrics like job creation, financial aid distribution, research investment, healthcare access and broadband expansion.

This report is a valuable resource for understanding the measurable benefits the UM System brings to Missouri communities. It supports informed decision-making, advocacy efforts and strategic planning by illustrating the tangible impact of university-driven initiatives at both the local and statewide levels.

[**Access your county's Impact Report**](#)



GRAND CHALLENGES

Grand Challenges

The Grand Challenges — Economic Opportunity, Educational Access, Health and Well-being, and Agricultural Stewardship — represent the most pressing issues facing Missouri communities. They are important because:

By focusing on these challenges, MU Extension in Lawrence county can better leverage university resources, data and partnerships to empower people to improve their lives, businesses and communities.

This report presents localized data and insights in how MU Extension in Lawrence county is addressing these challenges. Each section breaks down county-specific statistics compared to state averages.

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





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

Missouri 4-H for Ages 8 – 18

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.



4-H's Leadership and Civic Engagement programs foster understanding, confidence, and decision-making skills to empower young people to become informed and active citizens. These initiatives prepare youth to become future leaders by engaging them in programs where they have voice and influence.

Statewide programs such as the **Missouri State 4-H Council** and **Civic Engagement Ambassadors** give youth opportunities to represent their peers, advocate for issues that matter, and build connections with leaders across Missouri. These experiences help young people grow as confident communicators and thoughtful problem solvers, ready to lead wherever life takes them.



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

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

Legend



Agricultural Growth & Stewardship



Economic Opportunity



Educational Access & Excellence



Health & Well-Being

Local Impact

Lawrence County 4-H Members Participate in 4-H Day at the Capitol

Jefferson City, MO – More than 20] 4-H members, volunteers, and parents from Lawrence County joined nearly 900 Missouri 4-H participants at the State Capitol for 4-H Day at the Capitol. This event provided youth with the opportunity to engage in civic leadership, meet state legislators, and advocate for Missouri 4-H.

Governor Mike Kehoe and First Lady Claudia Kehoe welcomed Missouri 4-H members, recognizing the program's impact in developing confident and capable young leaders. Throughout the day, 4-H'ers met with their Representatives and Senators, sharing their experiences and highlighting how University of Missouri Extension's 4-H programs equip youth with skills for life and careers.

"4-H prepares young people to be engaged citizens, problem-solvers, and future leaders," said Lupita Fabregas, Missouri 4-H Sr. Director. "Events like 4-H Day at the Capitol reinforce that Missouri 4-H youth are Beyond Ready to make an impact in their communities and beyond."

Lawrence County 4-H members had the opportunity to tour the Capitol with State Representative Mitch Boggs, connect with fellow 4-H'ers from across the state, and see firsthand how government works. For many, it was an inspiring experience that deepened their understanding of civic engagement and leadership.



Profiles and stories



Lawrence County was well represented at the **State Poultry Day** held on the MU Campus in June. Earning top 8-10 year old judging honors was Nora Glassman. Nora was also third among junior competitors 8-13. Payton Duwe was 4th, Layten Prewitt was 5th junior and 5th 8-10 year old; and Aria Duwe was 8th and third in the 8-10 year old category.



The State 4-H Poultry Day provides youths with hands-on experience in cutting-edge industry practices as well as basic knowledge to help them succeed in their projects. Youths gained skills in grading eggs and poultry carcasses, identifying poultry parts and selecting quality live poultry, all while networking with youth from around the state who shared similar interests.

4-H Recognition Day is an annual event where county 4-H members are recognized for their project work. Awards are given to those who complete their project records and other 4-H forms. Local sponsors help provide prizes that help support the member's project area. At right, these are some of the youth who earned Super 4-H'er honors in 2025. 108 project record forms were completed in 35 project areas in 2025.



Lawrence County

Missouri 4-H



31 classrooms across Lawrence county were reached through the Embryology: **Hatching Chicks in the Classroom** program

culminating in 547 students learning about development, agriculture, sanitation, life cycles and animal care. Additional life skills gained include responsibility, caring, respect, teamwork, keeping records, planning and organizing.

Lawrence County 4-H shooting sports was fortunate to receive a grant from the NRA Foundation in 2025. The grant provided new archery equipment that will enable more 4-H members to participate in our program, which is taught by certified adult instructors. At right, Bryant and Jacob Woods, Miller Champs 4-H members, show the banner thanking the NRA Foundation for their support.



4-H offers great leadership and learning experiences at the state and national level. Hanna Sivils, left, earned a scholarship to **State 4-H Teen Conference** with her outstanding recognition form. Vincent Welters, Rosalina Albaladejo and Caydance Welters, center, gained valuable leadership skills at State 4-H Congress. Caydance was elected as a state 4-H Council Member during the event. Vincent and Rosalina earned a trip to National 4-H Congress based upon their outstanding recognition forms and interviews. They were among 20 Missouri delegates to this national event. Colton Kleiboeker and Carissa Simagna, right, were two of three members of the Missouri 4-H Dairy Judging team that competed at the Dr. George Heersche Jr. NAILE Invitational Dairy Judging Contest in Louisville, Kentucky. The team earned a 4th place finish. Colton was 7th high individual overall.



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

Agriculture and Environment

"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."

Eric Work, Heroes to Hives participant



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 AgrAbility Project provides practical education, on-the-farm assistance and agency referrals to farmers and ranchers with disabilities and their families to promote agricultural and rural independence. National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), administers the AgrAbility project.



Missouri Grazing Schools teach management-intensive grazing by dividing large fields into smaller paddocks and systematically rotating livestock among them. Producers who attend the grazing schools learn how to reduce costs through Improved livestock grazing and pasture management while getting insights into fencing, watering systems and grazing system design.

**The annual impact of management-intensive grazing is estimated to be
\$125 MILLION per year in Missouri**

Legend



Agricultural Growth & Stewardship



Economic Opportunity



Educational Access & Excellence



Health & Well-Being

Agriculture and Environment

Profiles and stories



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

. This was the 100th documented annual farm educational event in the county. Prior to this term, it is believed the first events were called **“Clover and Prosperity”** meetings. Lawrence County farm producers are an economic generator for the local economy. This program addressed ways this sector in the county economy can remain viable.

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



Lawrence County

Agriculture and Environment

Local Impact



Missouri Grazing School was held in April at Mt. Vernon with 37 participants. This was one of the largest of these events held around the state. These schools provide the most in-depth training on how to be successful with Management-intensive Grazing (MiG) practices. These three-day schools are unique to Missouri and have set a standard for teaching and demonstrating the newest grazing concepts. Other schools offered in 2025 occurred in Greene, Christian, Newton, Wright, Dade and Ozark counties. The schools allowed farmers to think differently about how they manage their pastures and have become a very effective program. There were over 150 livestock producers who attended the sessions from Southwest Missouri counties this year. Numerous presentations were offered along with on-farm field trips to evaluate pasture grazing systems.

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

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.



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

Lawrence County

Agriculture and Environment

Local Impact

Noncertified Restricted-Use Pesticide (NRUP) Applicator Training

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



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



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

41st Annual Southwest Missouri Spring Forage Conference - There were around 375 farm producers who participated in the conference in Springfield in February. There were fourteen key presentations and a trade show. This is one of Missouri's largest gatherings of farmers and ranchers and is hosted by a committee made up of extension field specialists and professionals from Soil & Water Conservation Districts, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Missouri Department of Conservation.

Lawrence County

Agriculture and Environment

Local Impact

First-Year Native Grass Tour – Twelve Lawrence County producers banded together to walk through the first-year challenges of growing native grasses. They worked with Tim Schnakenberg and Missouri Department of Conservation advisor, Jay Steele. A text group was developed called the Pierce City Native Grass Group and interactions between the group occurred all season. A tour was conducted in June to review five of the successful stands.



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



Lawrence County

Agriculture and Environment

Local Impact



The **Frost Seeding Legumes Workshop** offered by Caleb O'Neal, Tim Schnakenberg, and Terry Halloran covered the practice of improving fescue pastures with frost-seeded legumes. Diversifying the cool-season forage base with legumes extends the grazing season of the land resource and creates higher quality forage when compared to cool-season grass monocultures alone. These legumes also fix nitrogen into the soil, which can increase the yield of the surrounding grasses as well, while also diluting the toxicity of species like K31 tall fescue. Increasing yield and quality of forage, reduces the toxic effects fescue, increasing carrying capacity, better animal performance, and greater net profitability.



There were 94 participants who attended the **100th Lawrence County Soils and Crops Conference** in January. Sessions featured 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 the farmers in Lawrence County, 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.



A Grassfed Beef Production Workshop was offered by Caleb O'Neal in collaboration with the Missouri Forage and Grassland Council in March. There were 51 attendees. 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.

Lawrence County

Agriculture and Environment

Local Impact



There were 75 producers who attended the **2nd Annual Organics in the Ozarks Field day**. This event was organized by Caleb O'Neal in collaboration with the Missouri Organic Association. This program provides network opportunities and practical education for producers 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.

A program was developed by Extension personnel focusing on **Utilizing Drones in Missouri Agriculture**. The first drone school was held in Lawrence County and was coordinated by Caleb O'Neal. 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.



A Native Warm-Season Grass Seed Production Workshop attracted 23 farmer producers and was organized by Caleb O'Neal and Tim Schnakenberg. Drought is one of the primary challenges that livestock producers face in this region of the state, and a set of excellent tools commonly used to build resilience into grazing systems are native warm-season grasses. These species of grass make excellent forage and are extremely tolerant to hot and dry summers. A drawback to native grasses are the seed costs can be prohibitively expensive. The program was designed to empower producers to harvest native grass seed for future plantings on their farms and to develop potential business ideas from leaders in the seed sale business.



Lawrence County

Agriculture and Environment

Local Impact

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 6 and 12 attendees. Caleb O'Neal and Matthew Huchteman are the coordinators for the Southwest Missouri program. 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 provides networking opportunities for attendees and continued educational opportunities for those enrolled in the program.



The **SW-REEC Field Day** in Lawrence County attracted approximately 2,000 Missouri residents from the Southwest portion of the state. 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 multiple agronomic, horticultural, and livestock production research projects housed at the Southwest Research, Extension, & Education Center in Lawrence County. These research projects are a direct response to current needs identified in Missouri agriculture, with study objectives ranging from plotwork established to quantify the benefit of frost-seeded legumes into tall fescue pastures to developing new synchronization protocols for artificial insemination of beef cows. Current extension faculty housed at the research center are Cecilia Constantino Rocha, State Extension Specialist in Livestock Systems, and Caleb O'Neal, Plant Science Field Specialist.



Agriculture and Environment

Agriculture Business & Policy



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

Practical Economic Insights for Agricultural Lenders helped 1 Lawrence County lender 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.

SW-REEC Poultry Processing Demonstration trained 17 Lawrence 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.



Agriculture and Environment

Agriculture Business & Policy



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

A comment from an online participant was "The video was outstanding – best I've seen on any CPE I've done live.". Local residents benefit when local tax preparers have the opportunity to gain knowledge, which benefits their clients and communities. The tax schools are a program of the ag business and policy program of MU Extension, coordinated by Mary Sobba with help from a team of ag business specialists throughout the state.

The training included updates on legislation, rulings and cases, individual taxpayer issues, agricultural and natural resources topics, ethics, trusts and estates, agriculture and natural resource tax issues, business tax issues, business entity tax issues, IRS issues, installment sales, tax benefits of home ownership, retirement tax issues, and individual tax issues.



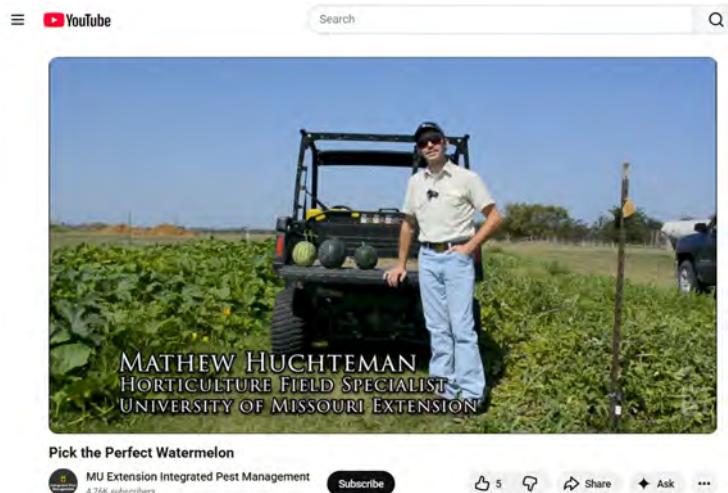
Agriculture and Environment

Profiles and stories

Horticulture specialists 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 vegetables 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.



A group of veterans in Southwest Missouri participated in the Heroes to Hives monthly field days. Attendance at each field day was typically between 6 and 12 attendees. Caleb O'Neal and Matthew Huchteman are the coordinators for the Southwest Missouri region of this program. 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.



In July of 2025, producers from across the southwest region gathered at the Southwest Research, Extension, and Education Center in Mt. Vernon for the SWMO Watermelon Workshop. 20 attendees enjoyed a one-hour presentation by Matthew Huchteman on commercial watermelon production, a tour of watermelon demonstration plots, and a taste test of 4 early varieties. Plots demonstrated differences in growth, yield and pest pressure for watermelon and cantaloup grown with and without low tunnels.



Agriculture and Environment

Profiles and stories



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 Career Development Event (CDE) Workshop** and **Career Exploration Day**. 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.



Fruit Tree Pruning Workshop: In December, Matthew Huchteman provided a fruit tree pruning workshop for residents of Barry and Lawrence county at Harwick Farms in Cassville. Eight attendees gained knowledge and skills necessary to prune fruit trees through a classroom session and hands on pruning activity in the orchard at Harwick Farms.



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

Business and Community



Missourians from all walks of life celebrated the **2023 Missouri Good Neighbor Week** Sept. 28 to Oct. 4 by completing and reporting neighboring acts and nominating others as the most engaged neighbors in their counties.

In 2023, the goal was to document 15,000 acts of neighboring. That goal was surpassed with 19,752 Missourians being positively affected during MISSOURI GOOD NEIGHBOR WEEK.



CLIENT HIGHLIGHT



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

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



Recovery Friendly Workplaces (RFWs) foster a workplace culture that promotes employee safety, health and well-being through strategies that support managers and employees, including reducing stigma and providing recovery resources related to the challenges surrounding substance use disorders. The framework was developed in partnership with MU Extension's Labor and Workforce Development Program.

As of 2024, 41 Missouri businesses have been designated recovery friendly workplaces, and 2,651 EMPLOYEES have been trained on addiction, stigma and naloxone distribution.

Legend



Agricultural Growth & Stewardship



Economic Opportunity



Educational Access & Excellence



Health & Well-Being

Business and Community

Civic Muscle

University of Missouri Extension Community Development Specialists build Civic Muscle, which is the collective strength of people in a place (neighborhood, town, region) to respond to challenges and proactively pursue thriving communities. Community development specialists coach communities and individuals to build Civic Muscle in four key “Muscle Groups.”

Belonging

- Neighboring 101 continued to grow nationally, reaching 1,032 participants from 36 states through monthly Zoom sessions featuring thought leaders such as Peter Block, Brenna Duffy, and Ian Campbell.
- The Republic Neighborhood Engagement Team launched with 15 block captains, most under age 30, demonstrating the next generation’s interest in local connection.
- Show-Me Neighborhood Art Week drew 73 public art displays and 468 votes for People’s Choice, encouraging creative expression and neighborhood pride.

Contribution

- The Out & About movement expanded, with 3 families in Republic hosting front-yard gatherings attended by over 30 neighbors.
- Missouri Good Neighbor Week (Sept. 28—Oct. 4) inspired statewide participation, with 12 cities issuing proclamations and local events ranging from film screenings (Leap of Faith and A Man Named Ove) to a “long-table” community meal.
- Faith-based initiatives linked community engagement with programs at the Council of Churches, Festival of Faiths, and the Springfield Interfaith Network.
- KY3 television supported the week with four public service announcements, amplifying the message of everyday kindness.



The Out & About movement expanded and involved members of the Republic Engagement Team.



Missouri Good Neighbor Week (Sept. 28—Oct. 4) activities included the Overlay Festival in Springfield and the public art that resulted from that event.

Business and Community

Civic Muscle

Leadership

- The Neighborhood Leadership Academy celebrated 56 statewide graduates, six from southwest Missouri, with local projects addressing local neighborhood needs.
- Delivered 20+ presentations to civic, educational, and faith groups, including Leadership Springfield and Give 5.
- Co-led a pre-conference session on neighboring at the Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities Conference with 144 registered participants.
- Maintained a consistent media presence: weekly and monthly newspaper columns appeared in the Springfield Daily Citizen, Greene County Commonwealth, and West Plains Daily Quill.
- Our neighboring work was featured in 203 national news stories and 16 podcasts.
- The We-Are-Neighbors blog recorded 303,145 annual page views, while the MUExtension417 YouTube channel saw 34,401 views.
- 18 Missouri newspapers printed your column on being an engaged neighbor, demonstrating your statewide communication reach.
- Formed the Missouri Neighboring Conference Workgroup with 22 members, planning the state's first Neighboring Conference for 2026.

Vitality

- The Engaged Neighbor Newsletter grew to 8,259 subscribers, maintaining its streak as the nation's best digital neighboring publication.
- Relaunched Missouri Historic Schools Alliance to preserve rural heritage and pride of place.
- Developed new senior adult program, "A History of Me," addressing loneliness and "intentional isolation," encouraging residents to reflect on choices that impact connection.

- The Greene County Agriculture Tour (Sept. 5) brought 28 participants together to explore local food systems and rural innovation.
- Partnered with Flourish on an asset mapping initiative in Springfield's Heart of the Westside neighborhood (6-person team).



Led a 2-hour workshop on neighboring for 144 attendees at the Creating Entrepreneurial Communities Conference in Excelsior Springs.



Spoke at Community Foundation of the Ozarks grant event for southwest Missouri projects focused on creating a sense of belonging.

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 Extension, Engagement, and Education Center in Mt. Vernon. 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



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.

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.



Second-Chance Hiring Speaking Engagements

KOLR- 10 AgrAbility Arthritis and Gardening

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.



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

Continuing Education



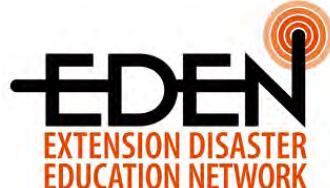
Established in 2002, the **Fire Officer Certificate Program** is designed for those who wish to further their professional development without the time and expense of traditional college classes. This program has been developed and evaluated to ensure it provides structured curriculum delivery and academic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



The programming from the **MU Fire and Rescue Training Institute** (MU FRTI) is available to all qualified fire and emergency first responders. Seventy percent of courses are held at the local departments or agencies. With most of the state's fire service personnel considered volunteer or part-time, this local access and flexibility assures training opportunities for all firefighter and emergency responders.



The **Missouri Extension Disaster Education Network** provides education and technical assistance to individuals and families, local governments, schools and organizations so they can prepare for and respond to natural and man-made disasters. Because of the unique relationship it maintains with each community, MU Extension is a key resource for the public, emergency services and public officials.



Legend



Agricultural Growth & Stewardship



Economic Opportunity



Educational Access & Excellence



Health & Well-Being



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

Health and Human Sciences



Building Strong Families

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



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 or addition challenges while the adult version focuses on adults aged 18 and older. Participants learn how to offer initial assistance and guide individuals toward the care they need.

In Missouri, approximately 1 MILLION ADULTS and 72,000 ADOLESCENTS suffer from MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES.*

*Missouri Department of Mental Health 2020 Status Report



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.

Legend



Agricultural Growth & Stewardship



Economic Opportunity



Educational Access & Excellence



Health & Well-Being

Health and Human Sciences

Local Impact

Mental Well-Being

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

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

Through MU Extension, community members were empowered not only to prioritize their own mental health and well-being, but also to extend that support to family members, friends, and community settings. Mental health awareness outreach also extended beyond traditional classrooms.

Programming at the Greene County Homeschool Fair, and Missouri State University Safety Day reached families from multiple counties, expanding the regional impact of Extension's mental health education efforts.

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



Health and Human Sciences

Local Impact

Tai Chi for Arthritis and Falls Prevention

- Objectives: improve balance and mobility to reduce arthritis pain and stiffness and fall risk through slow, gentle movements

In partnership with Marionville Library and Marionville Friends of the Library

- Generously funded by Marionville Friends of the Library
- Wednesdays and Fridays, 1:00 – 2:00 pm, March 26-May 30
- Total # started/enrolled: 10
- Total # completed at least 16 classes: 6

\$6,666
in estimated
annual medical
cost savings

Impacts: of the participants assessed/surveyed...

- ✓ 7 of 7 improved their lower body strength
- ✓ 5 of 7 improved agility, ease of walking, and dynamic balance
- ✓ 6 of 7 participants improved or maintained balance
- ✓ 7 of 8 reported feeling less lonely after taking the class
- ✓ 7 of 8 reported a greater sense of connection to others after taking the class
- ✓ 8 of 8 plan to apply the skills learned to improve their health in the future

“The exercises have helped loosen my back and neck muscles and I have seen lower blood pressure readings.”



Participants at the Marionville Library practice Tai Chi forms to improve their health and wellness.



“I can stand on one leg longer and more confidently.”

