



UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI EXTENSION

Maries County

2025 Annual Report

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**SERVE MISSOURI.
DELIVER MIZZOU.®**

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



Office of Extension
and Engagement
University of Missouri

VICE CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE

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

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

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

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

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

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

With appreciation,

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

WHO WE ARE

Faculty and Staff



Brandi Richardson
Extension and Engagement Specialist

Dawn Hicks
Family Nutrition Education Program

Rudra Baral
Agronomy

Bethany Prenger
4-H Specialist

Ray Walden
Community Development

Rachel Hopkins
Ag Business

Chrisee Wheeler
Livestock Specialist

Paulette Orsborn
Office Admin

Council Members

Chairman Rodney Southard

Vice-chairman Brian Auten

Secretary

Treasurer Brenda Johnson

Member-Vic Stratman

Member- Gene Gillespie

Member- Sara Stratman

Member- Steve Vogt

Member-Amanda Wieberg

Member- Diane Wieberg



County executives

Vic Stratman, Presiding Commissioner

Patrick Kleffner, Western District

Doug Drewel, Eastern District

BUDGET AND MORE

Appropriations budget

Income	
County Appropriations	\$10,000
Expenses	
Salaries/Benefits	\$4830
Travel	\$2426
Office Supplies/Service	\$2381
Insurance	\$100
Postage	\$88
Misc	\$198
Total Expenses	\$10,023

Maries County partners

Farm Bureau
MFA Oil
Vesper Solar
Maries County Bank
Vic Strattman
Maries County Commission
Maries County Library

Return on investment

University System	154,000
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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 Maries County Extension Council, faculty and staff would like to express our appreciation to the Maries County Commissioners for their continued support of extension programs.



Local support

Did you know you can donate directly to Maries 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.

Maries County



UM System Footprint in the county in 2025

I FY25 county students

- 48 students**
- 39 Undergraduates
 - 9 Graduate and professional students
 - 38 Full-time students
 - 10 Part-time students
 - 15 Pell grant recipients (aid year 2025)

II County employees and retirees

- 99 people employed by UM**
- 50 Campuses
 - 49 MU Health Care (includes additional employees gained via the recent integration of Capital Region Medical Center)
- 26 UM retirees and beneficiaries
 UM salary and retirement income: \$5.3 million
 UM state tax revenue: \$160,994
 UM federal tax revenue: \$763,284

III County alumni

- Selected school alumni**
- 1 Medicine
 - 13 Nursing
 - 12 Health Professions
 - 1 Dentistry
 - 1 Pharmacy
 - 2 Optometry
 - 6 Veterinary Medicine
 - 38 Agriculture
 - 56 Engineering
 - 3 Law
- Alumni teaching K-12**
- 15 teachers
 - 18.3% of all district teachers
 - 1 principal or administrator
 - 25.0% of all district principals and administrators

IV County breakdown

MU
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 students • 121 alumni • 6 employees
UMKC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 students • 4 alumni • 0 employees
Missouri S&T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 students • 86 alumni • 44 employees
UMSL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 students • 16 alumni • 0 employees



V County services provided

- Health care (FY25)**
- 2,569 in-state patients seen at MU Health Care, with \$686,846 of uncompensated care
 - 3 in-state patients seen at UMKC School of Dentistry with a statewide average of \$50.53 per patient in uncompensated care
 - MU Health Care's Missouri Telehealth Network recorded 1,249 visits to 704 patients having ZIP codes associated with the county
- Extension (2024)**
- 4,651 Total educational contacts from MU Extension to residents of the county, including:
 - 623 contacts related to productive farming, better gardening, and managing natural resources
 - 3,836 contacts related to healthy eating and aging, strengthening families, personal finance, or youth development
 - 24 contacts related to starting businesses, developing community leaders, or renewing the local economy

VI Construction projects

- \$23,833 remitted to 2 county vendors, for 3 projects

VII County properties and offices

MU Extension in: Maries County

UM System Statewide Footprint

Economic and Community Development Highlights

- In FY24, Business Development Specialists worked with small businesses and entrepreneurs statewide to create or retain 71,140 jobs.
- For every dollar invested from 2019 to 2021, the MU Extension Business Development Program has returned \$133 in economic impact for its clients by increasing sales more than \$1.6 billion. For a total impact of \$3.1 billion, the program has generated more than 37,000 jobs and attracted nearly \$451 million in capital investments and \$1.5 billion in government contracts.
- Between FY19 and FY24, UM System brought Missouri more than \$1.75 billion in federal and private research funds, funded primarily from outside the state, but spent within the state.



In FY25, UM System was issued 26 patents and filed 76 new U.S. patent applications, and earned \$6.5 million in licensing income.



In FY25, to improve access to medical and health related services, MU Health Care's Missouri Telehealth Network's Show-Me ECHO program provided 17,336 hrs of case-based instruction to 3,146 learners located in 102 of 114 Missouri counties and the city of St. Louis.

Education and Training Provided



41,523 police, fire fighters, and medical professionals attending continuing education (2024)



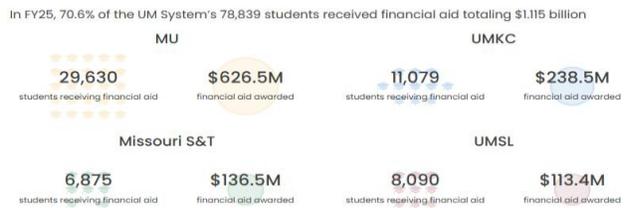
Agriculture and natural resource programs served 297,919 farmers and related businesses (2024)



254,220 youth and stakeholder educational contacts in 4-H clubs, schools, camps and other programs (2024)

Education Highlights

FY25 Financial Aid Awards



UM System's MOREnet (Missouri Research and Education Network) provides internet connectivity, access, support and training to 58 higher education institutions (231,000 students), 478 K-12 school districts (830,000 students) and 134 public libraries (serving nearly 5.6 million Missourians) in FY24.

- UM System awarded 50.5% of the 31,689 Bachelor's or higher degrees awarded by Missouri four-year public institutions in 2023-24.
- UM System awarded 35.0% of the 1,776 research doctorates and 26.8% of the 3,796 professional doctorates awarded by Missouri public and not-for-profit private institutions in 2023-24.
- In FY24, UM System's \$30.7 million in National Science Foundation (NSF) grants represented 96.9% of all NSF grants made to Missouri public colleges and universities.
- A \$25 million USDA-funded Missouri Climate-Resilient Crop & Livestock (CRCL) project has had the following impact 2.5 years into the 5-year project: Over 1,200 Missouri farmers implemented conservation practices such as cover crops, regenerative grazing, and improved nutrient management practices on approximately 300,000 acres across the state.

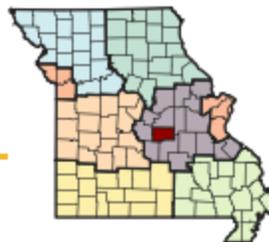
Supporting the University of Missouri is an investment in the future of Missouri.

The university advances Missouri citizens and communities through its mission of teaching, research, public service, and economic development across our four campuses and University of Missouri Extension.

Prepared in December 2025, based on the best available and most recent data. Data Sources include: Missouri Office of Administration • UM IR • MU Institute for Public Policy • Center for Applied Research and Engagement Systems (CARES) • MU • UMKC • Missouri S&T • UMSL • UM System • UM Health Care • MU Extension • US Census Bureau • US Dept. of Health and Human Services • National Science Foundation



Missouri Grand Challenges: Local Solutions



MARIES COUNTY

Knowing Missouri's Needs

MU Extension asked Missourians to share the greatest challenges they and their communities face.

We heard that feedback and made big changes in the way we work with council and local partners to improve lives. Locally, a network of county engagement and subject matter specialists now share MU's knowledge, research and engagement, targeting programs, information and assistance in:

- agriculture and environment
- youth and family
- business and community
- health and safety

For each grand challenge, MU Extension and Engagement targets a specific gain by 2023:



Economic opportunity

Increase MU Extension and Engagement's economic impact to the State of Missouri from \$1 billion to \$1.5 billion overall, and from \$88 billion to \$100 billion in agriculture, the top economic sector



Educational access and excellence

Increase participation in postsecondary education from 66% to 70%



Health and well-being

Improve Missouri's health ranking from 40th to 35th in the nation

Knowing Local Challenges



CHALLENGE 1: Economic Opportunity: *Economic Mobility*

Average Earnings per Job

Average earnings per job can reflect the type of economy, skill of employees, and availability of jobs and workers in an area. Average earnings is calculated by dividing total full-time and part-time employment by total earnings. Earnings is the sum of three components of personal income--wages and salaries, supplements to wages and salaries, and proprietors' income. Full-time and part-time jobs are counted at equal weight. Both employment for wages and salaries and proprietors employment are included, but the employment of unpaid family workers and volunteers is not included. Average earnings per job is a measure of the wages paid at jobs in the county not the earnings of people who live in the county. The dollar figures shown are not adjusted for inflation.

2022 Average Earnings (\$)

\$26,047

Maries



Missouri

\$62,528 🟡

Data Source: US Department of Commerce, [US Bureau of Economic Analysis Regional Economic Accounts](https://www.bea.gov/regional-accounts). 2007-2022.

Cost-Burdened Households (30%)

Cost-burdened households, where housing costs exceed 30% of total annual household income, is one measure of the relationship between cost of living and income. Households with high housing costs have fewer dollars remaining for other expenditures and are more likely to live paycheck-to-paycheck. The 22.03% of households in the report area are considered cost-burdened. This is below the state average of 23.80%.

Cost-Burdened Households, Percent

22.03%

Maries

Missouri

23.8%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, [American Community Survey](https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/). 2019-23.

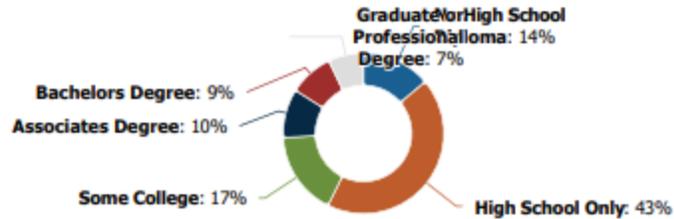


CHALLENGE 2: Educational Access and Excellence: *Educational Attainment*

Adult Educational Attainment

Educational attainment shows the distribution of the highest level of education achieved in the report area, and helps schools and businesses understand the needs of adults, whether it be workforce training or the ability to develop science, technology, engineering, and mathematics opportunities. Educational attainment is calculated for persons over 25 and is an estimated average for the period from 2017 to 2021.

In the report area, 16.9% of adults have at least some college education and 18.7% of adults have an associate's level degree or higher. However, 43.4% stopped their formal educational attainment after completing high school, and 13.9% of adults did not complete high school.



No High School Diploma

13.92% Missouri 8.41%

Maries

Data Source: US Census Bureau, [American Community Survey](#). 2019-23.

Data Source: US Census Bureau, [American Community Survey](#). 2019-23.



CHALLENGE 3: Healthy Futures: *Mental Health*

Deaths of Despair

Untreated mental health conditions, substance abuse, and stress have caused an epidemic of "deaths of despair" across the United States. Research shows that deaths due to suicide, alcohol-related disease, and drug overdose have caused the first decreases in U.S. life expectancy in the 21st century. Within the report area there were an estimated 35 deaths of despair, or 59.71 deaths per 100,000 population between 2011 and 2017. This rate is higher than the state rate of 52.01 per 100,000, and represents an increase of 13.82% since the 2001-2007 report period.

Mortality Rate, 2014-2020

59.71 Missouri 52.01

Maries



Data Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [CDC - National Vital Statistics System](#). Accessed via [CDC WONDER](#). 2014-20.

Poor Mental Health Days

This indicator reports the average number of self-reported mentally unhealthy days in past 30 days among adults (age-adjusted to the 2000 standard). Data were from the 2022 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) annual survey and are used for the 2025 County Health Rankings.

Average Poor Mental Health Days per Month, 2018

5.8 Missouri 5.6

Maries



Data Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System](#). Accessed via [County Health Rankings](#). 2022.



CHALLENGE 4: Agricultural Growth & Stewardship: *Soils Testing*

Recent public initiatives and USDA programs are putting a focus on producers to improve the health of their soil. The USDA-NRCS defines soil health as the continued capacity of the soil to function as a vital, living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals and humans. A variety of practices can improve soil health, including regular monitoring, sampling and testing protocols. The MU Soil and Plant Testing Laboratory provides testing and unbiased, research-based recommendations for economically viable and environmentally safe nutrient management practices across Missouri.

Report Area	Agriculture	Home and Garden	Community Areas	Research	Total
Maries	352	26	0	0	378
Missouri	13,742	4,773	421	6,406	25,342

Data Source: [University of Missouri Extension Soil and Plant Testing Laboratory Annual Summary, 2022.](#)

Maries County



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.



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.

Maries County

2025 Annual Report

4-H Youth Development- Maries County

4-H Youth Development Program

4-H programs are built on the belief that youth learn best by doing. With the support and guidance of adult volunteers serving as mentors, youth engage in hands-on learning experiences through projects in areas including engineering and technology, environmental science and natural resources, plant and animal science, leadership and personal development, expressive arts, and healthy living, in addition to taking on leadership positions which help to mold them into the caring, competent, and confident citizens who know the value of contributing to their communities.

During the 2024-2025 4-H Year in Maries county of County 807 youth were reached through 4-H programming through MU Extension.

4-H programming reaches youth through a variety of delivery modes in Maries County, including Community Clubs, SPIN Clubs or short-term 4-H programming, and in-school or afterschool membership or school enrichment programming. These varied delivery modes allow participants to participate in the format that best meets their needs and interests, while focusing on multiple skills including public speaking, leadership, exploring sparks (or interests), developing life skills, responsibility, group decision making, and exploring college and career pathways.

DIAGRAM of Maries County 4-H Enrollment by Delivery Mode

4-H Community Club Members

208 youth reached through the 6 community clubs in Maries County during the 2024-2025 4-H Year.

Over 208 4-H members were engaged in science related projects and experiences. Collectively, youth participated in hundreds of hours of documented community club work and hundreds of hours of community service in Maries County.

4-H School Enrichment, In-school and Afterschool Clubs

832 youth were reached by school enrichment programs in Maries County in 2024-2025.

Multiple classrooms across the county were reached through the Embryology: Hatching Chicks in the Classroom program culminating in hundreds of hours of learning about development, agriculture and sanitation, in addition to responsibility. 832 youth were reached through 4-H youth development programming through in-school and afternoon school program focusing on topics including Science, animal development and STEM.

Maries County

4-H Programming Participation

Youth served in a leadership role within their club or council. Youth from the County also held leadership roles beyond the county serving as (Regional Representative, Missouri State Council, Missouri Civic Engagement Ambassadors, Shooting Sports Ambassadors, National Congress Delegates, National Conference Delegates, Ignite Delegates)

Youth demonstrated their public speaking and communication skills by participating in the Achievement (Major Events) Event held Maries County this year.

Youth showcased what they learned in their projects this year with exhibits by shown at the Maries Fair.

Maries County was represented by youth exhibiting in the 4-H Building and Livestock Shows at the Missouri State Fair in 2025. Youth also had their exhibit selected as a Best of Show in the 4-H Building. Youth also showcased their public speaking skills by presenting demonstrations in the 4-H Building at the Missouri State Fair.

Maries County youth also sited in on their future through their shooting sports projects which strives to teach them focus and safety while honing their skills and developing sportsmanship. Youth competed in the Missouri 4-H State Shoot events this year and Maries County represented the state of Missouri at the National 4-H Shoot in Grand Island, Nebraska in 2025.

State level recognition forms were completed by members. Completing these forms allow members reflect on the things they have done and learned throughout the 4-H year and how they can apply what they have learned in the upcoming year.

Youth received a Missouri 4-H Scholarship as an investment in their future.

Youth learned more about civic engagement and the Missouri Legislature by participating in 4-H Day at the Capitol.

Youth participated in MOVE Across Missouri, where youth and adults are encouraged to track their physical activity and fitness in their daily life, learning about healthy lifestyles.

Youth from Maries County collected food items and funds which donated meals through the 4-H Feeding Missouri Initiative. Many of these meals were given to support food insecurity needs locally.

Members participated in the Missouri 4-H Sportfishing Slam and used their skills to capture the beauty around them by participating in the Great Outdoors: Missouri 4-H Photography Contest.

Youth also took their 4-H experience beyond the county lines participating in the following events:

Maries County

4-H Camp
State 4-H Equine Tour
State 4-H Teen Conference*
State 4-H Congress*
State Meats Contest*
State Horse Judging Contest*
State Hippology Contest*
State Livestock Judging Day*
State Poultry and Rabbit Day*
State Public Speaking*
Citizenship Washington Focus
Zoo Apprenticeship Camp- Busch Garden

Maries County members enrolled in projects during the 2024-2025 4-H Year. The top project areas included:

Beef
Swine
Shooting Sports
Sewing
Cake Decorating
Arts and Crafts
Woodworking
Photography
Welding
Gardening

4-H Programming Impact

4-H members are twice as likely to go college compared to their non 4-H peers and they tend to pursue careers in STEM fields (Lerner & Lerner, 2011).

4-H also prepares youth for the workplace. Youth must be prepared to live and work in a world we cannot completely envision- competing for jobs that do not yet exist, using technologies that have yet to be identified. 4-H is the only youth development program with direct access to technological advances in agriculture, life sciences, and social sciences from the university system. This brings relevant science content and hands-on learning that helps youth thrive (Arnold, Bourdeau, & Nott, 2013).

Youth who earn a bachelor's degree increase their annual earnings by \$2 million over their lifetime. (U.S. News and World report, 2011)

Impact in Their Own Words

Maries County

4-H Volunteers

4-H Volunteers are the true muscle of the 4-H program, extending the reach of 4-H professionals and making a difference in the lives of youth by connecting them with a caring adult to support them in their development.

45 Adult and 7 youth County 4-H members were supported by twelve enrolled, screened and oriented adult volunteers supporting the development of youth in the 2024-2025 4-h Year.

Maries County volunteers participated in volunteer development efforts including the Club Leader Summit and Project Leader Summit offered by 4-H Professionals to learn and be equipped for the leadership roles in which they serve.

Adult volunteers serve as mentors for our youth, helping them transition into caring, healthy adults who contribute back to their communities, which is priceless.

Resources

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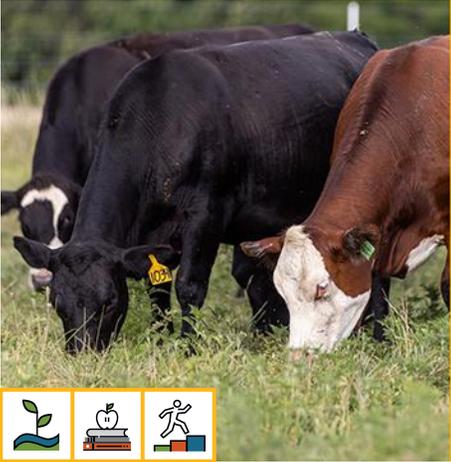
Maries County

Missouri 4-H

Local Impact



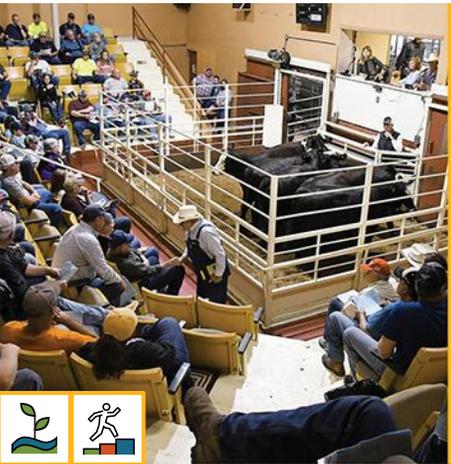
Agriculture



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



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



The Missouri 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.



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.

Ag Business

Rachel Hopkins
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Covering Franklin, Gasconade, Osage, Maries, Miller, Pulaski, Phelps, Dent, Crawford, Washington, St. Francois and Ste. Genevieve Counties

2025 AT A GLANCE

- **38** Lenders attended 'What Lenders Need to Know in 2026' in Jefferson City. Lenders heard from presenters discussing Market Outlooks, Policy Updates, Beef Feeding Calculator, Farmland Values and Rental Rates.
- **60** attendees at the Farm Tax Workshops held in December, both in-person and online. Rachel hosted 2 locations (Ste. Genevieve & Vienna) and presented on drought & farm lease.
- **89** mid-Missouri farmers and ranchers attended the Central Missouri Forage & Beef Conference in Maries County.
- **35** local producers attended the Wurdack Producer Field Day in October to hear about local applicable topics.
- **120** producers attended three Grazing Schools where Financial Aspects of Grazing were taught.

\$47,753 in lease's consulted on in 2025.



The cannulated bovine is always a memorable time with the FFA students.

1924 DIRECT CONTACTS 7140 INDIRECT CONTACTS



Rachel spoke to the East Central Cattlemen's Association in March 2025 on tips for succession planning.

KEY SUCCESSES

- ✓ **Monthly emails** out to subscribers letting them know of upcoming Extension programs in the region.
- ✓ Connect & Educated **50 STL City youth** about agriculture at **Wurdack Extension Center**.
- ✓ **Rural Safety Day** educated **177 3rd graders** in Washington County of hazards they might encounter and thus preventing traumatic injuries.
- ✓ **Annie's Project** brought together **13 women in Maries County** for the 6 weeklong event. It included field trips, guest speakers and activities.
- ✓ **Wurdack FFA Day** provided a learning opportunity for **528 9th graders** on different fields in agriculture and exposes them to new ideas and concepts.

Legend



Agricultural Growth & Stewardship



Economic Opportunity



Educational Access & Excellence



Health & Well-Being

Agriculture and Environment



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

Business and Community



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 offered breakout sessions in Excelsior Springs' shops and businesses, providing firsthand insight into the world of entrepreneurial communities.

Missouri Good Neighbor Week



Largest civic engagement event of the year in Missouri.

Snapshot of Results for 2025

Honored **20** Neighbors **4** Businesses

138 Neighbor Nominees

42,134 Missourians

Impacted by acts of neighboring done during Missouri Good Neighbor Week 2025. Up from 31,129 acts in 2024.

86 Counties

110 Cities

433 Reported Entries

15 City Proclamations

6 Cities Springfield, Excelsior Springs, Manchester, Houston, Fremont Hills and Lee's Summit

Earn Most Neighborly Status

Missourians from all walks of life celebrated the **2025 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.



Legend



Agricultural Growth & Stewardship



Economic Opportunity



Educational Access & Excellence



Health & Well-Being

2025 ANNUAL REPORT-AGRONOMY PROGRAM

Rudra Baral

Agronomy Specialist, University of Missouri Extension

Serving Cole, Miller, Pulaski, Osage, Maries, Gasconade and Laclede County



Executive Summary

The 2025 calendar year represents a year of substantial impact, growth and partnership across the University of Missouri Extension's East Central Region. As the Agronomy Specialist serving seven counties (Miller, Cole, Osage, Gasconade, Maries, Pulaski, and Laclede), I delivered research-based education, created innovative tools and services, and strengthened community connections in alignment with MU Extension's Core Principles: Educate (Learning & Access), Create (Innovation & Opportunity), and Connect (Engagement & Partnership).

During 2025, 238 participants benefited from direct educational programs, while 2.2 million were reached indirectly through Extension publications, newspapers, digital media, soil testing and community outreach. In addition, 1,830 soil samples were reviewed, 71 producers received direct technical assistance, and multiple partnerships resulted in improved access to conservation programs, grants, and applied agronomic solutions.

EDUCATE: Learning & Access

Providing evidence-based information and creating meaningful learning opportunities for diverse audiences in our region.

Direct Educational Programming

1. Workshop and Training Delivery

I conducted 16 major educational programs reaching 238 direct participants in 2025:

- **Private Pesticide Applicator Training (PPAT):** Conducted 4 training sessions across Cole, Gasconade, Maries, and Osage Counties, training 40 producers who subsequently received MDA applicator license recommendations. This essential safety training ensures pesticide application compliance across the region.
- **Understanding Your Soil Needs Workshops:** Delivered 4 workshops (Cole, Pulaski counties, plus a virtual program in December) to 34 producers. The December virtual workshop expanded reach significantly with 100 participants, demonstrating strong producer demand for accessible soil management education.

Horticulture Programs in 2025

Dhruba Dhakal, Field Specialist in Horticulture

University of Missouri Master Gardener Training

In-person master gardener training was organized in mid-Missouri in 2025 which included participants from various counties in central Missouri. Eight participants attended the 12-week long training. The training educated the participants through 12 lectures and 8 field sessions.

University of Missouri Master Pollinator Steward

In-person master pollinator steward was organized in mid-Missouri in 2025 which included participants from various counties in central Missouri. Five participants attended the 6-week long training. The training educated the participants through six lectures and three field sessions.

Spring Garden Seminar - 2025

A full day-long garden seminar was organized in Jefferson City, MO in 2025. Eighty-five participants attended the seminar. Participants learned various topics such as landscape design, plant disease diagnosis, lessons learned about tomatoes, after 20 years of the TomatoFest, Flower farm in Tipton and garden IPM session.

Other workshops and seminars on horticulture - 2025

Dhruba organized workshops and seminars on various horticulture topics. Some of them were garlic production workshop, talk on planting cover crops in the garden, workshop on cool season vegetable production, workshop on tomato production in home garden, and talk on making and using compost in the garden.

Soil, Plant and Water Sample Test

Extension office receives soil, plant and water samples from local people and sends them to University of Missouri soil and plant testing lab. Field specialist in horticulture receives the test report and provides recommendations and interpretation to the clients. In 2025, Miller County Extension Center received 20 soil samples for horticulture crop fields. Horticulture specialist sent the reports to the client and discussed with them the nutrient status and other soil properties. The specialist also discussed what needs to be done to improve their soil health and soil fertility status.

On-site Garden and Horticulture Farm Visit

Livestock – Maries County

Agriculture and Environment

Chrisee Brandl – Field Specialist in Livestock

Local Impact - Livestock

Maries County Program Activities totaled approximately **259** contacts. Programs included Maries County Fall Beef Dinner, Central Missouri Beef Conference, SMQA, and the Show-Me-Select Sale in Vienna, MO at South Central Regional Stockyards.

Virtual programs totaled approximately **381** contacts.

Maries County Direct Contacts totaled approximately **10**. The methods of contact included phone calls, texts, emails, office visits, and farm visits with topics directly related to livestock.

Maries County Program Highlights

Central Missouri Beef Conference –

The Central Missouri Forage and Beef conference is a producer focused meeting bringing knowledge to farmers from across central and eastern Missouri. This year's conference included various topics including drought mitigation, native grasses, tick born diseases, and a market outlook. Chrisee presented on using annuals to extend the grazing season. There were a total of 89 attendees.

Show-Me-Quality Assurance –

This was a 4-H event where youth learned livestock management practices in handling and use of animal health practices. The goal of the training is for youth to leave with a good understanding of producing a safe and wholesome product. There were a total of 76 youth who participated hands-on.

Maries County Fall Beef Dinner –

This event hosted the County Century Farm and Farm Family. MU Extension specialist in Agronomy, Ag Business, and Livestock presented on related topics. Chrisee presented on the Show-Me-Select (SMS) heifer development program requirements and most recent sale statistics. The SMS sale is held in Vienna at South Central Regional Stockyards. There were a total of 35 attendees at this event.

Business and Community



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 2023, the conference offered breakout sessions in Benton County's shops and businesses, providing firsthand insight into the world of entrepreneurial communities.

The conference drew 104 ATTENDEES, generating an estimated initial economic impact of around \$33,000 for Benton County.



The **Neighborhood Leadership Academy** provides in-depth leadership training that emphasizes community-building principles, project planning, organizational leadership and personal leadership skills.

"The overall knowledge that I have gained through this course has been amazing. From how to engage stakeholders in the community, to planning events and hosting meetings, these are all tools that I will fully utilized going forward."

2022 NLA graduate



Neighborhood Leadership Fellows is an advanced leadership program centered on driving systemic change. Twenty-six residents of North St. Louis City and part of North St. Louis County, graduated from the program in 2022. Fellows gained advocacy skills that enable them to take on civic leadership roles and influence policymaking. Key program outputs include a 10-year personal leadership plan by each fellow and group projects aimed at fostering more equitable regional policies for their neighborhoods.

In the most recent St. Louis election cycle (April 4, 2023). **ELEVEN NEIGHBORHOOD LEADERSHIP FELLOWS** alumni ran for office, and **SEVEN OF THEM WON** their election. In that group, individuals were elected to serve as mayors, school board members and city council representatives.

Business and Community



Ray Walden
Community Development Specialist
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Serving Crawford, Dent, Maries, Phelps, Pulaski, and Washington Counties

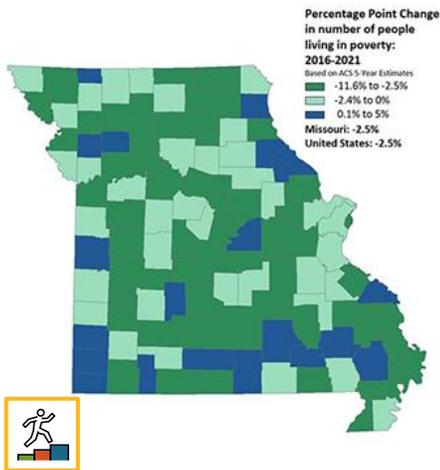
2025 impacts included:

- Supporting workforce-focused initiatives designed to strengthen employer capacity, expand training access, and align regional strategies, including a Regional Workforce Training Summit held August 4 with employers and training agencies to discuss data, resources, and strategy development.
- Presented information with other community development colleagues on Regional Planning Commission resources and potential opportunities to collaborate.
- Presented a session on Financial Preparation for Grant Projects July 18 as part of a multi-day training workshop for area government and nonprofit representatives.

Other community development projects/programs supported:

- Comprehensive and Strategic Planning
- Statewide housing workgroup
- Nonprofit Technical Assistance (NPTA): one-on-one support, leader skill-building, resource library, referrals
- Give 5 — volunteer engagement events
- Estate Planning Workshop (Dent County April 17)
- Missouri Good Neighbor Week — encouraging residents to recognize and celebrate acts of neighborliness.

Outreach included: Extension Council presentations, local newspaper articles and radio interviews.



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

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



DEMOGRAPHIC, ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DATA TRAINING

MU Exceed offers customized data training. Participants learn how to use public data through hands-on exercises and demonstrations.

In 2022, Exceed provided data training to MORE THAN 200 MISSOURIANS. 95% of the attendees said that the information they learned was useful to their work.



Strategic Doing is a one-day workshop that guides community stakeholders through an inclusive, problem-solving approach to developing high-impact projects to address local development issues.

"I highly recommend this incredible program to any community looking for focus and direction."

Strategic Doing participant

The city of Risco, Mo., lacked retail options for food. Risco's Strategic Doing workshop and follow-up activities resulted in a GROCERY STORE OPENING in the community.



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

Continuing Education

SNAP-Ed Public Value Statement 2025

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Education or SNAP-Ed) brought \$11,419,598 in federal funds to Missouri. The funds support engagement with 70,722 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients and eligible citizens of Missouri who learned about being active and healthy eating on a budget. This year we had 970,939 indirect educational contacts through newsletters, health fairs, and food pantries.

_____ direct and indirect contacts were made in _____ County.

Participants in SNAP-Ed learn the importance of making healthier meals and snack choices, eating breakfast more often, are more willing to try new foods, increase their physical activity, and make healthier food choices. Those who practice healthy eating and are physically active are more likely to contribute to a healthy labor force and enjoy a high quality of life throughout the lifespan.

This vital programming effort also reduces healthcare costs over the participant’s lifetime, saving taxpayer money in reduced public healthcare benefits and insurance premiums.

EFNEP Public Value Statement 2025

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) brought \$1,624,777 federal funds to Missouri. These funds were used to enroll 424 limited-resource families in nutrition education and meal preparation classes, representing 1,550 family members. Additionally, 2,942 youth were enrolled in EFNEP classes.

_____ of these youth and adult participants reside in _____ County.

Participants in EFNEP learn the importance of making healthier meals and snack choices, eating breakfast more often, trying new foods, increasing their physical activity, and making healthier food choices. Those who practice healthy eating and are physically active are more likely to contribute to a healthy labor force and enjoy a high quality of life throughout the lifespan.

This vital programming effort also reduces healthcare costs over the participant’s lifetime, saving taxpayer money in reduced public healthcare benefits and insurance premiums.

FY25 SNAP Participation

County	Total
Dent	2,215
Gasconade	3,929
Maries	4,973
Phelps	6,365

FY25 EFNEP Participation

County	Total
Dent	40
Gasconade	38
Maries	0
Phelps	0

-- OR --

Legend



Agricultural Growth & Stewardship



Economic Opportunity



Educational Access & Excellence



Health & Well-Being



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 Law Enforcement Training Institute (LETI) has provided basic and advanced training for law enforcement since 1948. LETI's **Basic Peace Officer Academy** exceeds the 600 hours of training required for licensure in Missouri. From 2019 through 2025, the basic academy has licensed almost 400 peace officers, more than any other academy in the state. During that time, all but one graduate became employed by a law enforcement agency. LETI graduates come from around the state and return to their communities to serve and protect.



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.





Resilience is the capacity to adapt when faced with adversity. **WeCanPROSPER Resilience Training** is a 2.5 hour training for participants to evaluate their personal resilience, tap into resources and create an action plan to enhance their resilience. Upon completing the training, participants can attend a facilitator session, enabling them to deliver the content within their communities and strengthen resilience within their networks.

100% of participants indicate that the skills and techniques they learned will help them become MORE RESILIENT.



Brain and the Disease of Addiction provides a foundational understanding of how the brain is affected from substances such as drugs and alcohol and how the disease of addiction develops. The Brain and the Disease of Addiction Program is for individuals, parents, students, healthcare professionals, and groups and organizations who will benefit from an understanding and knowledge of the science of the disease of addiction.



Rural Immersion Program is an opportunity for medical students interested in rural practice to gain experience in the rewards and challenges of working and living in a rural community, examining rural health disparities and quality of life concerns within a specific region. Group activities and meetings with community leaders in business, government, education, health care and natural resources give students a preview of life in a rural area.

Rural Immersion Program participants agree that it has significantly contributed to them FORMING INSIGHTS on the suitability of living and working in a rural community, both personally and professionally.



Cooking Matters

Make quick, tasty, and affordable meals everyone will enjoy.

Learn valuable tips for stretching your food dollars and how to prepare a recipe and sample easy, low-cost, nutritious and delicious dishes.

“We prepared barley jambalaya in class and one participant mentioned she had never tried barley before. She tried the jambalaya and really enjoyed it. A few days later she excitedly said she made the recipe at home and her whole family enjoyed it.”

Cooking Matters facilitator about a class participant



A Matter of Balance helps older adults overcome their fear of falling, increase their activity levels and reduce their risk of falls. In eight classes, participants learn fall-prevention strategies, develop personal prevention plans, acquire balance-improving exercises and make lifestyle changes to minimize their fear of falling.

“I have cleaned my house of clutter for safety, put non-slip stickers on my tub floor, I’m getting much more regular exercise and I’m feeling stronger.”



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

Your Mental Health First Aid is primarily designed for adults who regularly interact with young people (ages 12-17) facing mental health or addiction 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