



UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI EXTENSION



Marion 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

Michael Krauch

Regional Director

Lisa Doster

Extension Engagement Specialist

Karen Coleman

Youth Program Associate

Brenda Schreck

Field Specialist in Livestock

Justin Keay

Field Specialist in Horticulture

Robert (Nick) Wesslak

Field Specialist in Agronomy

Mary Sobba

Field Specialist in Agricultural Business

Carrie Elsen

Field Specialist in Nutrition & Health

Meg Hackler

Office Support

Julie Shaw Brown

Bookkeeper

**SERVE MISSOURI.
DELIVER MIZZOU.®**

County Commissioners

David Lomax

Presiding Commissioner

Larry Welch

Eastern District Associate Commissioner

Lacey Miller

Western District Associate Commissioner

Council Members

Amy Masterson

Chair, District IV

Kristy Trevathan

Vice-Chair, District VI

Rose Hudson

Secretary, District II

Mason Burch

Treasurer, District IV

Robin Peiter Horstmeier, Ph. D.

elected member, District I

Kenny Lovelace

elected member, District I

Amanda Hall

elected member, District III

Kay Ellis

elected member, District V

Steve Wetton

elected member, District V

Kara Viorel

elected member, District VI

Lacey Miller

appointed member, County Commission

Megan Gottman

appointed member, Farm Bureau

Jessica Lehenbauer

appointed member, 4-H Council



BUDGET AND MORE

Appropriations budget

Income

County Appropriations 25,500.00

Total Income 25,500.00

Expenses

Salaries/Benefits 13,703.00

Travel 5,272.00

Postage 250.00

Telephone 400.00

Office Supplies/Service 1,000.00

Contract Services 1,300.00

Insurance 2,900.00

Miscellaneous 200.00

Furniture/Equipment 200.00

Total Expenses 25,500.00

Local support

Did you know you can donate directly to Marion 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.



Extension
Marion County
University of Missouri

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.

Thank you

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

UM SYSTEM COUNTY IMPACTS

MU Extension in Marion County Community Impact Report

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

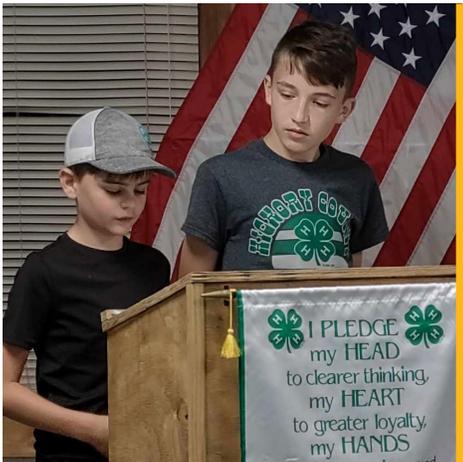
Missouri 4-H for Ages 8 – 18



What is 4-H?

4-H is where Missouri's young people find their spark and learn by doing. Whether raising animals, coding robots, growing gardens, or giving back to their neighbors, 4-H members gain real-world skills with the help of caring mentors.

Rooted in University of Missouri Extension, 4-H connects classrooms, communities, and families to create learning that sticks—building confident, capable leaders who are Beyond Ready for life. In 4-H, youth discover their strengths, practice resilience, and learn to lead with heart—preparing them not just for what's next, but for anything that comes their way.



Community clubs are at the heart of 4-H. Led by trained volunteers, members come together regularly to learn, lead, and serve. Youth elect officers, enroll in projects, and plan hands-on activities that build leadership, teamwork, and responsibility. Some clubs focus on a single project—like photography or livestock—while others explore a variety of topics throughout the year.

SPIN (Special Interest) **clubs** provide a short-term way to dive deep into a specific topic with expert guidance. These clubs meet for several weeks to a few months, giving youth flexibility while developing skills to be Beyond Ready for life.



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.

Legend



Agricultural Growth
& Stewardship



Economic
Opportunity



Educational
Access &
Excellence



Health
& Well-Being

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, 14% of Marion County youth were reached through 4-H programming through MU Extension.

4-H Community Clubs

- 240 youth reached through nine community clubs and 113 volunteers
- Over 584 youth were engaged in science related projects and experiences.
- Collectively, youth participated in 2,600 hours of documented community club work and 900 hours of community service

Marion County Junior Fair

- 1227 exhibits
- 277 participating youth

MO State Fair

- 51 participating youth
- 3 youth received Best in Show selections
- 7 youth presented demonstrations

Teen Conference

Four Marion County 4-H members attended 4-H Teen Conference CSI: Communicate, Serve, Inspire in May on the University of Missouri campus. Youth participated in a fun-filled two-day event where they were able to make new friends from across Missouri, serve the community, inspire themselves and others in exciting leadership sessions, enjoy the dance and game night, and investigate life on Mizzou's campus!



4-H Projects

4-H Clubs offer in-depth educational experiences in which members learn life skills such as decision making, public speaking, and working with others. Members learn by doing under this guidance of adult volunteers, who lead a wide variety of projects that support 4-H members in finding their SPARK. Club and project leaders also involve youth and teens in community service, leadership opportunities, and educational trips. 4-H project work and related educational experiences help youth explore interests in citizenship, communication, and leadership.

Marion County 4-H community club members enrolled in a combined total of 874 projects in 2024-2025. The top project areas included:

- Arts & Crafts
- Swine
- Archery
- Bacon
- Photography
- Beef
- Foods
- Cake Decorating
- Poultry
- Rabbits

Local Impact



4-H programming reaches youth through a variety of delivery modes in Marion 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.

4-H SPIN Clubs

29 youth participated in 4-H through the SPIN Clubs which are short-term 4-H clubs focused on a specific topic. The SPIN Club offered in Marion County this year, focused on Wildlife.

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

490 youth were reached by school enrichment programs in Marion County in 2024-2025.

19 classrooms across the county were reached through the Embryology: Hatching Chicks in the Classroom program culminating in 200 hours of learning about development, agriculture and sanitation, in addition to responsibility.

Shooting Sports program

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



Local Impact

21 youth demonstrated their public speaking and communication skills by participating in the Achievement Event held in Marion County this year.

Seven youth also showcased their public speaking skills by presenting demonstrations in the 4-H Building at the Missouri State Fair.

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

- 4-H Camp
- State 4-H Teen Conference*
- State 4-H Congress*
- State Dairy Judging Contest
- State Livestock Judging Day
- State Public Speaking*

Five youth participated in the State Livestock judging contest, one youth in the State Dairy judging contest and three youth in the State Public speaking contest.



Profiles and stories



MO 4-H State Hippology Team – Eastern National 4-H Roundup



2025 Missouri 4-H Hall of Fame

Marion County, Jerry and Debbie Durbin

Jerry and Debbie Durbin have dedicated 23 years of service to the Pleasant Day 4-H Club in Marion County, shaping the lives of countless youth through their leadership, guidance, and commitment. Debbie has led projects in Arts and Crafts, Home Environment, and Cake Decorating, while also serving on the Marion County 4-H Council in roles including President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Even after her own children aged out of 4-H, Debbie has continued to support the program as a 4-H judge for Achievement Day and fairs, as well as a chaperone at State events. Jerry has served as a 4-H leader for 13 years, guiding members in woodworking and fishing projects and has contributed countless hours supporting County and State Fair activities. For many years, both Jerry and Debbie have been the trusted ride, transporting Marion County State Fair projects to and from Sedalia, ensuring members' hard work is showcased. Through their decades of dedication, Jerry and Debbie Durbin have made a lasting impact, inspiring youth, supporting programs, and strengthening the community for generations to come.



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through credible statewide programs

Agriculture and Environment

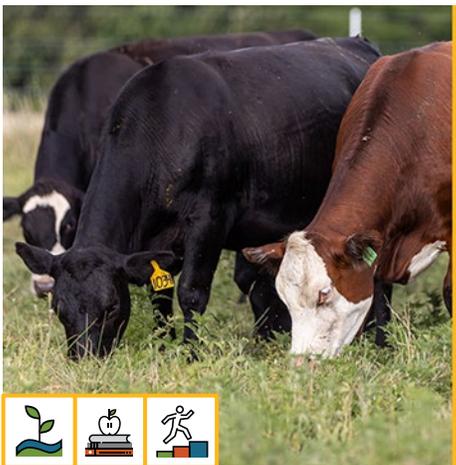


MU Extension Specialists quickly respond to **emergencies and disasters** across the state. If a disease outbreak occurs in livestock, specialists are there. If a natural disaster such as flooding occurs, specialists are there. Missouri farmers can count on MU Extension to guide them through emerging issues with knowledge and expertise.



The Missouri Integrated Pest Management Program (IPM), funded by USDA grants, has been an important extension program for more than 30 years. Mizzou IPM distributes articles, pest monitoring data and publications on how to improve the application of integrated pest management strategies and systems in crops. In addition, the new Soybean Growth Monitoring Report is released through IPM every two weeks during the growing season.

The MU Soil Testing Program delivers research-based nutrient and lime recommendations to more than 32,500 customers annually.



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

Local Impact

Pesticide Applicator Training:

Nick Wesslak taught 87 total applicants for PPAT licensing in the Northeast Region.

Nick presented at the 2025 Commercial Pesticide Applicator Training Recertification in Columbia, Missouri to 953 individuals over a 9-day period, with 68 of those individuals being online.

Nick also conducted Non-Certified Restricted Use Applicator (NRUP) Training for area agribusinesses. All total, 66 individuals employed by agribusinesses in the Northeast region were able to receive the necessary training to conduct commercial application operations

Pesticide Safety:

Nick Wesslak taught youth pesticide safety programming to high school and middle school aged children so they could learn safe usage of pesticides and other chemicals.

The program aimed to help youth better understand why pesticides and other chemicals are important to human safety and food production, while also helping them to a better understanding of the risks involved with the use of these products.

775 middle and high school students participated in this programming in the Northeast Region



Agriculture and Environment

Local Impact

Integrated Pest Management:

Nick Wesslak participated in several activities regarding MU IPM (Integrated Pest Management) efforts in the field. Several photos and videos related to IPM were captured for later educational use during educational activities.

The Northeast Region was home to several IPM activities such as corn and soybean disease scouting and migratory insect trapping and monitoring stations for the IPM Pest Management Network.

This network served as an alert system for the entire northeast Missouri region and helped indicate to producers what species of migratory pests should be scouted for in the field.

Integrated Pest Management Continued:

The MU Extension 4th Annual Crop and Forage Chat held in the Northeast Region attracted 18 in person attendees and 13,705 indirect educational contacts were generated through partnering with the Quincy Herald Whig.

Participants took from that day a better understanding of current plant disease issues in corn and soybeans, grazing management practices, and corn and soybean insect pest management.

Nick also conducted an in-field TV interview with WGEM discussing farmers' winter preparations for next year's crop. This interview broadcast to approximately 99,000 homes and generated 113,241 indirect educational contacts.



Agriculture and Environment

Local Impact

Opportunities for Drones in Missouri Agriculture:

Nick presented on federal regulation exemptions needed to operate an agricultural utility drone and delivered hands on manual flight control instruction to 35 program attendees in the Southwest Region and 6 program attendees in the Northeast/East Central Region. He also developed the curriculum for these sections. This was part of a statewide initiative funded by a grant from the Missouri Governor's office.

Shelby County Ag Night:

Nick helped organize and MC the Shelby County Ag Night. This event gave attendees the opportunity to choose two 30-minute educational sessions covering a range of topics, including ag technology, livestock, crop science, economics, and health. 65 people attended this event.

MU Certified Strip Trial Program and Miscellaneous Trials:

Nick held several trials in the Northeast region. Trials were as follows: starter response plots in corn (2), in-furrow DAP soybean response (1), in-furrow DAP wheat response (1), cover crop trials (1).

Soils:

Nick oversaw the soil sampling program at the county level and made recommendations to clients based upon their soil sample results for the eight northeast counties of the state of Missouri. There was a total of 219 participants. Participants in the soil sampling program learned about their soil fertility levels and received research-based recommendations to achieve their desired yield goal of their particular crop(s).



Agriculture and Environment

Local Impact

Crop Consultations and Contacts:

Nick Wesslak consulted with 713 different individual agricultural contacts on topics related to row crops, forage crops, and horticulture crops, from across the Northeast region.

Soil and Water Conservation and Management:

Nick Wesslak served as Secretary on the Marion County Soil and Water Conservation District Board.

Northeast Missouri Agricultural Connection:

Nick Wesslak served as a team member of the NEMO Ag Connection Newsletter. He wrote and edited articles for the newsletter. Subscription numbers led to a total number of indirect contacts of approximately 27,000 individuals throughout the region.

Engagement and Stakeholder Relations:

Hannibal Middle School hosted a career day and Nick presented for the ag career session and focused on his career in Extension. Special emphasis was made on discussing real world scenarios Nick encounters and how STEM knowledge and education help to resolve the issues Nick and producers face. Nick saw 200 students that day. Nick also participated in the Lewis County Progressive Farm Safety Day, where he taught 125 5th graders about pesticide and household chemical safety.

Nick saw a successful event with the Northeast Missouri Old Threshers Ag Safety Day, with 538 participants. Attendees focus was placed on learning valuable safety minded practices when working around the farm.



Mississippi Hills Master Naturalists

Local Impact

Mississippi Hills Master Naturalists' (MHMN) saw a very busy year with chapter activities starting off with Clarksville Eagle Days. The Honeysuckle Hack team met monthly throughout the year to remove invasive honeysuckle from Riverview Park in partnership with Hannibal Parks and Recreation. MHMN participated in the Hannibal Chart Teen Task force Health Fair with 5 members staffing a booth on the benefits of spending time in nature.

Several members assisted at Mark Twain Lake to cut and place cedar trees in exposed flood plains for fish habitat. MHMN also held a youth deer shed hunt at Mark Twain Lake with 200 children. The 2nd annual Hannibal Eagle Days was also conducted by MHMN, with 650 visitors enjoying a live eagle show, several educational nature booths, crafts and activities for children, a nature story time, and conservation education opportunities.

MHMN conducted prairie burns, participated in a training for Sturgeon Watch in partnership with MDC, and partnered with the Mark Twain Lake Army Corps of Engineers in building 80 fish habitat structures which were later sunk in Mark Twain Lake. For Earth Day, MHMN partnered with the Army Corp of Engineers at Mark Twain Lake/Frank Russell Recreation Area for a day of fishing with students from 3 local elementary schools. MHMN members participated in the Inaugural Missouri Birding Challenge.

Members participated in the Knox County Safety Day with a presentation on Outdoor Safety that focused on tick and mosquito bite prevention. MHMN joined Monroe City for the Queen of the Prairie "Every Yard a Prairie" event where MHMN sold native plants for planting, demonstrated pollination and answered questions about conservation issues.

The chapter worked with Mark Twain State Park on invasive species control throughout the summer months. MHMN joined the Missouri Dark Sky Program. MHMN partnered with Hannibal Arts Council to conduct the Wild and Wacky Art Adventure in Hannibal and taught students about Missouri turtles. Over 200 children attended this event.

MHMN held a Stream Team event on Bear Creek with an invertebrate study and a physical data collection on the stream. Reece Worthington discussed "Prairies before the Plow" with chapter members and the chapter surveyed old cemeteries around Mark Twain Lake for native species. The chapter also participated in the Indiana Bat Monitoring program.

MHMN also participated in the Northeast Missouri Old Thresher's Ag Safety Day discussing outdoor safety with students from several elementary and middle schools in the Shelby County area. MHMN also presented a similar program to over 200 4th grade students in Pike County on outdoor safety. Subject areas included poison ivy, venomous snakes, sun safety, and ticks and mosquitoes. MHMN also helped with litter pickup in Ralls County that continued throughout the summer. A fall hike was held at the Bridalspur Hunt Club.

MHMN held a Fall Field Day located on the Mississippi Riverfront in Canton. With the cooperation of MHMN, the city and citizens of Canton, and Culver Stockton University, numerous non-native tree species were removed and mulched. Trails were also constructed that day, and 3 educational speakers presented on conservation topics at the local library. MHMN also participated in the Audubon Christmas Bird Count.

Mississippi Hills Master Naturalists

Profiles and stories



Mississippi Hills Master Naturalists Presenting at the Teen Health Fair on Nature Connections



Mississippi Hills Master Naturalists Presenting at Hannibal Eagle Days

Mississippi Hills Master Naturalists removing invasive honeysuckle plants.



Agriculture and Environment

Local Impact

Performance Tested Bull Sale by Brenda Schreck

MU Extension livestock faculty visit farms to record yearling weights and hip heights for bulls enrolled in the Northeast Missouri Beef Cattle Improvement program. These measurements provide producers with valuable performance data for herd management and marketing decisions. Producers in this program sell bulls in the annual Northeast Missouri Performance Tested Bull Sale in Palmyra, Missouri, as well as off the farm.

Missouri producers benefit by gaining access to alternative markets that support sustainable business practices. In Marion County, 4 beef producers participated in the program. At the 2025 sale, 33 bulls sold for an average of \$6,221 per head, generating \$205,293 in total sales. These dollars strengthen the local economy and benefit northeast Missouri.



Show-Me-Select Replacement Heifer Program by Brenda Schreck

The Show-Me-Select (SMS) program focuses on increasing the adoption of management practices by Missouri farmers, improving long-term herd reproductive efficiency, and increasing profitability. Program participants learn the importance of pre-breeding examinations and how these practices impact both economic and productivity levels. In Marion County 4 beef producers enrolled in the SMS program this year and 3 consigned to a sale.

The Northeast Region hosts two Show-Me-Select Heifer sales annually in Palmyra, Missouri. In 2025, 486 heifers sold in the spring and fall sales with a combined average price of \$4,236. These Palmyra sales alone added \$2,096,212 to the local economy by improving reproductive efficiency and marketing opportunities for Missouri-raised heifers.



Agriculture and Environment

Local Impact

Livestock Lick Tub Roundup by Brenda Schreck

Since 2022, University of Missouri Extension has partnered with local farmers to repurpose used livestock lick tubs into container gardens for nutrition education. This program, led by MU Health and Human Sciences and SNAP-Ed staff, promotes sustainability and hands-on learning for adults and youth. Brenda Schreck, MU Extension Livestock Specialist, has coordinated tub collection efforts across the region, encouraging farmers to contribute to this statewide initiative. In Scotland County, the program engaged 1 participant, and farmers donated 13 tubs, strengthening community engagement and eco-friendly practices. To date, Schreck has collected over 550 tubs.



Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) by Brenda Schreck

The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) ensures the U.S. food supply remains safe by shifting the focus from responding to contamination to preventing it in livestock feed. MU Extension livestock specialist Brenda Schreck works directly with agricultural firms that provide and/or process livestock feed to develop and maintain feed safety plans. In Marion County, 1 plan is maintained as part of ongoing compliance efforts.

Across Northeast Missouri, Schreck continues to maintain 23 plans for elevators and feed manufacturing firms. Discussions focus on implementing documentation for preventive controls and maintaining accurate records as required by the FDA. Feed safety manuals help firms track preventive measures and ensure animal feed safety standards are met.

Women in Agriculture Workshop by Brenda Schreck

Women in Ag is a hands-on workshop geared toward women involved in agriculture in northeast Missouri. Four Marion County participants attended the workshop and learned about Missouri Farmers Care programs, pollinators, women's health from the ground up, and enjoyed interactive activities such as bug bingo and tasting farm-to-table meals. Participants also created barn quilts as part of the hands-on experience.

By offering programs targeting women in agriculture, MU Extension empowers women to make informed decisions about farm and home management.

- 98% of respondents rated their overall satisfaction as Very Good or Excellent
- 100% of respondents gave top marks for the quality of information presented
- 98% found the materials provided to be highly useful and relevant



Agriculture and Environment

Local Impact

Horticulture Programming in the Northeast and East Central Regions by Justin Keay

In 2025, 898 individuals attended thirty-four educational programs that Justin organized or co-taught. Participants in these in-person and online programs are actively engaged in the learning process. Programs included home vegetable gardening, commercial fruit and vegetable production, on-farm produce safety workshops, hands-on grafting fruit tree workshops, selling at the farmers market training, soil fertility management trainings, and many more. Justin developed and offered five innovative programs this year including *Starting and Sustaining a Farmers Market Webinar Series*, *Twilight Pest Management Farm Tours*, *Jump Start Your Farm*, *Boosting Profits with High Tunnel Tomatoes*, and *Soil Health and Cover Crops for Vegetable Gardens*. There were 397 requests for horticulture information through calls, emails, and walk-ins. Justin performed 16 farm visits across the Northeast and East Central regions and fielded 397 requests for horticultural info.

Justin is the editor of the Missouri Produce Growers Video Newsletter, which reaches over 1000 subscribers every month. Nineteen educational videos were created in 2025 and are hosted on the MU IPM YouTube Channel. Educational videos from the newsletter received over 38,000 views.

Participants who engaged in horticulture programming learned about insects, weeds, diseases, soil health and fertility, general plant care, and variety selection. Small farmers learned how to increase their fruit and vegetable yields, grow their farm revenue, and protect Missouri's natural resources.

In the Media

Justin drafted eleven press releases and participated in five radio interviews to educate Missourians and connect them to the resources of MU Extension. The press releases were picked up by local, regional, and national media, contributing to a total media reach of over 9 million individuals.

Building Strong Partnerships

Justin has continued to build and strengthen partnerships to help extend the reach and grow the impact of his programming. He collaborated on events with the Missouri Farmers Market Association, Missouri Farmers Union, and Missouri Organic Association.

Connecting Farmers to USDA Farm Service Agency Resources

Justin assumed a 10% appointment on a grant project focused on connecting small farmers to USDA Farm Service Agency resources and supporting producers in developing crop budgets and small farm business plans. Through this appointment, Justin has developed new educational programs and strong relationships with MU Extension's Agriculture Business and Policy Team.

Recognition and Honors

Justin's efforts to build strong programs and grow the small farm sector in the Northeast and East Central regions of Missouri were recognized through the Dave E. Baker Distinguished Extension Programmatic Leadership Award, and the National Association of County Agricultural Agents National Achievement Award.

Marion County



Pictured above: Justin teaching about regulations for farmers market vendors and growers at the Montgomery City farmers market vendor meeting.



Pictured above: Justin teaching growers about integrated pest management at a Twilight Farm Tour.

Pictured right: Growers learn about pest monitoring at a Twilight Farm Tour that Justin organized.





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 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.

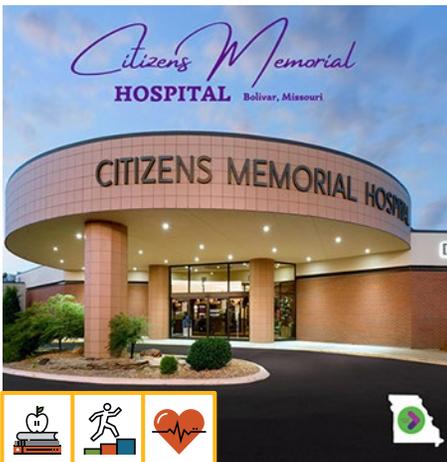
AMERICA'S SBDC MISSOURI CLIENT HIGHLIGHT



LOGS
- OF -
GLORY

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

Local Impact

Workforce Development Summit-Northeast

In 2025, MU Extension advanced a statewide workforce development initiative through a series of regional summits aimed at strengthening Missouri's workforce ecosystem. As part of this effort, I hosted the Northeast Region Workforce Summit in Hannibal in September. This event brought together stakeholders from public, nonprofit, and private sectors to review regional workforce data, identify gaps, and explore collaborative solutions. Across seven summits held statewide, 263 individuals engaged in presentations and roundtable discussions, which fostered meaningful dialogue and captured real-time insights into workforce challenges and opportunities. Many participants were new to MU Extension, expanding our reach and fostering new partnerships.

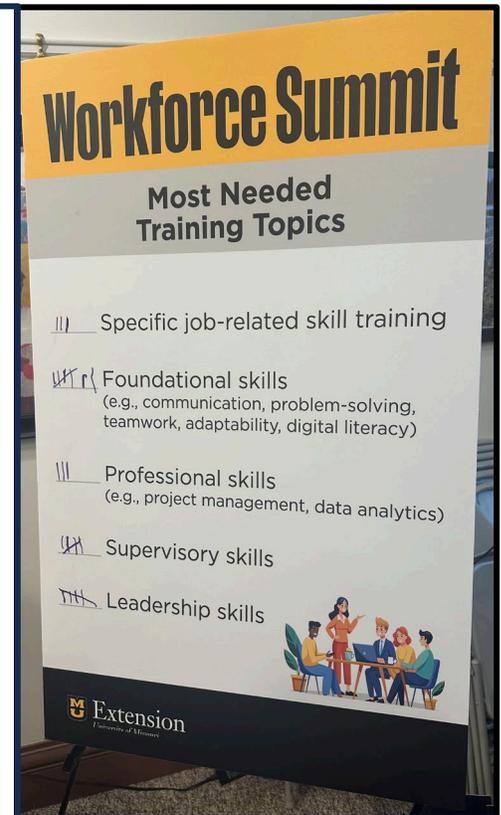
In Northeast Missouri, key education and training providers partnered with the summit, including Culver Stockton College, Moberly Area Community College, North Central Missouri College, Hannibal Regional Economic Development, and MU Extension, ensuring strong representation from Northeast Missouri higher education and workforce training organizations.

The summits produced actionable findings that will shape future programming and policy efforts. Feedback highlighted increased use of workforce data dashboards, greater awareness of available resources, and strong interest in addressing employment barriers and retention strategies.

For Northeast Missouri, the most significant impacts included:

- Raising awareness of workforce resources and data tools for planning and recruitment.
- Strengthening partnerships among employers, nonprofits, and higher education institutions.
- Identifying critical workforce gaps and training needs to guide future MU Extension programming.
- Increasing engagement in strategies to overcome employment barriers.
- Positioning the region as a key contributor to statewide workforce development efforts.

Looking ahead, MU Extension will build on this momentum by analyzing and sharing summit findings in early 2026, conducting follow-up visits to deepen stakeholder engagement, and aligning training programs with identified needs. This will ensure that the insights gained from the summits translate into tangible workforce development outcomes for Missouri and the Northeast region.



Business and Community

Local Impact

Extension Tax Schools by Mary Sobba

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

The training included updates on legislation, rulings and cases, individual taxpayer issues, agricultural and natural resources topics, ethics, trusts and estates, agriculture and natural resource tax issues, business tax issues, business entity tax issues, IRS issues, installment sales, tax benefits of home ownership, retirement tax issues, and individual tax issues. The schools were approved for up to 16 hours of continuing education credit by the IRS, Missouri Bar and for CFP continuing education. Total continuing education hours reported to IRS for the schools was 4,024 hours.

The teaching teams included CPAs, a former IRS stakeholder liaison, an IRS certified retired ag economics professor, an attorney, a certified financial planner, Missouri Department of Revenue, MU faculty and extension ag business specialists.

The evaluations had many positive comments and helpful suggestions. One comment from an online participant was “The video was outstanding — best I’ve seen on any CPE I’ve done live.”. Planning is underway to offer trainings in 2026. Local county residents benefit when local tax preparers have the opportunity to gain knowledge, which benefits their clients and communities. The tax schools are a program of the ag business and policy program of MU Extension, coordinated by Mary Sobba with help from a team of ag business specialists throughout the state.

The resources for the schools included the IRS, 2025 National Income Tax Workbook from the Land Grant University Tax Education Foundation, and materials written by the instructors.

The 2025 school attendance totaled three hundred eighty-nine people, which was an 11% increase from 2024. The participants were from throughout Missouri, including 5 from Marion County and two from out of state.



Business and Community

Local Impact

Agriculture Lender Seminar by Mary Sobba

Sixty-five lenders from 20 Missouri counties and Illinois attended an ag lender seminar in Mexico. Lenders learned about crop and livestock outlook, agriculture & tax policy, rental rates & land values, input costs and enterprise budgets and regulatory updates. The average tenure of agricultural lender was 12 years with a range of 1 to 38 years. On average, lenders had 207 agricultural loans in their portfolio with an average loan size of \$33,526. Given this information, it is estimated the Mexico Agricultural Lenders Seminar reached 13,455 loans valued at 4,487.6 million dollars. Attendees drove an average of 49 miles to attend the program with a range of 5 to 95 miles.

By attending University of Missouri's Agricultural Lenders' seminars, lenders gain knowledge to help their clients make better decisions based on objective education and resources. More information and better decisions benefit their portfolio of producers, landowners, and agribusinesses through enhanced understanding of enterprise budgets, market expectations, and other decision-influencing factors affecting families' and businesses' financial health.

Participants described the seminar as informative, well-organized, and enjoyable. Several complimented the quality of the presentations and expressed appreciation for the event overall. In addition to the ag lender seminar in Mexico, there were seminars in Chillicothe, Jefferson City, Springfield and Warsaw. The total statewide attendance was 198 ag lenders, including 7 ag lenders from Marion County.





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

Health and Human Sciences



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.”



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.”



Stay Strong, Stay Healthy supports older adults in maintaining strength, balance, and mobility to fully engage in the activities that matter most to them. The program combines safe, effective exercises with practical information on nutrition and wellness, helping participants build confidence, connection, and **well-being** for lifelong health.

After eight weeks, participants in the Stay Strong, Stay Healthy program showed significant improvement in their STRENGTH, BALANCE and SLEEP QUALITY.



Legend



Agricultural Growth & Stewardship



Economic Opportunity



Educational Access & Excellence



Health & Well-Being

Health and Human Sciences

Local Impact

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.

8,449 direct and indirect contacts were made in Marion 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.

40 of these youth and adult participants reside in Marion 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.



The Gift of Aging Conference — Hannibal MO

by Carrie Elsen

The 2025 Gift of Aging Conference, held August 12 at the American Legion Hall, marked the second annual event focused on empowering older adults to age safely, independently, and with confidence. Co-sponsored by University of Missouri Extension and community partners, the free, one-day conference welcomed 125 participants from 10 Missouri counties and Illinois, reflecting expanded regional outreach through radio, newspaper, and social media promotion. Attendees engaged in expert-led sessions on aging-related health, nutrition, and financial safety, while accessing expanded on-site services including free cholesterol and blood pressure screenings, medication take-back, document shredding, and community resource booths. Supported by \$4,350 in grants, in-kind contributions, and local sponsorships, the event achieved a 98% satisfaction rate among surveyed participants and strengthened cross-sector partnerships. Building on this success, the 2026 conference will mark the third annual Gift of Aging event, continuing to grow its reach and impact for older adults and caregivers across the region.



Missouri Health Symposium by Carrie Elsen

The 2025 Missouri Health Symposium was held on December 5, 2025, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., offered both in-person and virtually to maximize accessibility and participation. This annual event is a collaborative effort between University of Missouri Extension, A.T. Still University, and Truman State University—three institutions dedicated to advancing health education, research, and community wellness across the state of Missouri.

The theme for the 2025 event, “The Science and Practice of Holistic Health,” reflected the growing national and statewide interest in comprehensive approaches to well-being that integrate physical, emotional, social, and spiritual health. The symposium delivered interdisciplinary insights and practical strategies designed to support health professionals,

The symposium featured four expert-led sessions highlighting the scientific, cultural, and historical dimensions of holistic health. The event achieved strong statewide participation and engagement. The event had a total of 204 registrations, representing 76 in person, 128 online. The symposium represented 15 Missouri counties, reflecting a broad distribution of interest and participation across the state.

The 2025 Missouri Health Symposium successfully advanced dialogue on holistic health and strengthened collaboration among educational institutions, healthcare professionals, and community partners. Through diverse programming and strong participation, the event reinforced Missouri’s commitment to promoting evidence-based, whole-person health strategies.



MISSOURI HEALTH SYMPOSIUM

THE SCIENCE AND PRACTICE OF HOLISTIC HEALTH

December 5, 2025 | 9:00 am - 2:30 pm
Truman State University
Student Union, Georgian I Rooms A & B

Program

- 9:00 am - Welcome and light refreshments
- 9:30 am - The Future of Health and Wellness Coaching: Building Resilience and Well-Being in an Era of Unprecedented Change
Dr. Kevin Cloninger, University of Missouri
- 10:30 am - Tai Chi Principles, History, Foundations and Holistic Health
Alicia Amyx-Winrod and Jenni Nevatt, University of Missouri Extension
- 11:30 am Lunch (available for purchase at the Student Union)
- 12:30 pm - Psychedelic Assisted Therapies in the US: From Public "Threat" to promising Treatments
Dr. Doreck Daschke, Truman State University
- 1:30 pm - History and Emergence of Osteopathic Medicine
Jason Haxton, A.T. Still University
- 2:30 pm - Closing - All are cordially invited to visit the ATSU Museum



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Marion County
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