



UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI EXTENSION

# Reynolds County 2025 Annual Report



180 W. Main Street  
PO Box 721  
Ellington, MO 63638  
573-663-7343

**SERVE MISSOURI.  
DELIVER MIZZOU.**

**MU** Extension  
*University of Missouri*

an equal opportunity/ADA institution

**VICE CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE**

108 Whitten Hall

Columbia, MO 65211

PHONE 573-882-2394

EMAIL [cchiggins@missouri.edu](mailto:cchiggins@missouri.edu)

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

As I reflect on the past year, I am struck by the remarkable progress we have made together.

MU Extension continues to deliver on its mission of linking the University of Missouri with every community across our state, ensuring that Missourians have access to the knowledge, resources, and partnerships they need to thrive.

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

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

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

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

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Chadwick C Higgins'.

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

## OUR COMMUNITY

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

## OUR MISSION

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

## OUR MAIN PROGRAM AREAS

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

# WHO WE ARE

## Faculty and Staff Resources

- Donna Aufdenberg**  
Field Specialist in Horticulture
- Leslie Davis**  
Nutrition Program Associate
- Sarah Denkler**  
Southeast Regional Director
- Emily Doosing**  
Field Specialist in 4-H Youth Development
- Julie East**  
County Office Support Staff
- John Fuller**  
Field Specialist in Human Development
- Sarah Higgins**  
Field Specialist in Natural Resources
- Evan Holley**  
Field Specialist in Nutrition & Health
- Eric Meusch**  
Field Specialist in Livestock
- Jason Morris**  
Field Specialist in Agricultural Business
- Debra Rayfield**  
Intermittent County Support Staff
- Jerry Richards**  
Cooperative Feral Hog Outreach Educator
- Stephanie Schindler**  
Extension Engagement Specialist
- Haley Schwantz**  
Field Specialist in Agronomy

## Council Members

- Bill Rayfield, Chairman**  
**Richard Clayton, Vice-chairman**  
**Darlene Helt, Secretary**  
**John Lewis, Treasurer**  
**Dawn Bell**  
**Larry Pogue**  
**Laura Jean Helt**  
**Paulisa Laughlin**

## County Commission

- Steve Chitwood, Presiding Commissioner**  
**Larry Pogue Jr. District 1 Commissioner**  
**Eddie Williams, District 2 Commissioner**



# BUDGET AND MORE

## Appropriations budget

Income	
County Appropriations	20,000
Total Income	20,000
Expenses	
Salaries/Benefits	12,998
Travel	2,137
Telephone	503
Office Supplies/Service	3,062
Utilities	215
Insurance	274
Rent	1,200
Total Expenses	20,389

## Return on investment

University System 76,138

**For every dollar invested by the county, MU invests \$3.81.**

## Reach

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

## Key Outcomes

- 2,456 youth and adult participants from Reynolds County were a part of the SNAP-Ed program in 2025.
- 9 Participants completed the Business Bootcamp series sponsored by Missouri SBDC, the Ellington Chamber of Commerce, and University of Missouri Extension in Reynolds County.
- 53 youth participants in 4-H programs in Reynolds County.
- Reynolds County residents submitted 51 soil samples for testing and results interpretation through MU Extension specialists.
- Digital skills workshops offered in Reynolds County educated 13 residents on Artificial Intelligence, how to use their smartphones, and other topics.
- In 2025, Reynolds County Extension offered over 25 different workshops and programs for the residents of Reynolds County.



## Local support

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

# UM SYSTEM COUNTY IMPACTS

## MU Extension in Reynolds Community Impact Report

This report offers a detailed overview of how MU Extension positively impacts Reynolds 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 Reynolds 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 Reynolds County is addressing these challenges. Each section breaks down county-specific statistics compared to state averages.

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



# REYNOLDS COUNTY PARTNERSHIPS

Reynolds County MU Extension, in partnership with the Ellington Chamber of Commerce, successfully launched its first Early-Stage Business Bootcamp. **The program supported local entrepreneurs and was made possible through funding from a Missouri State eFactory grant.**



In partnership with local coffee shop, Pour Sisters and Ozarks Alive, Reynolds County MU Extension Council hosted a pie contest celebrating local talent and community involvement.

During the past year, Reynolds County MU Extension delivered meaningful, community-focused programming that addressed critical needs of local residents. Through a partnership with Dan McCarty of McCarty Insurance, **Medicare update sessions were provided, increasing community awareness and understanding of available healthcare options.** Additionally, Extension played a key role in the planning and coordination of estate planning classes, equipping participants with essential knowledge to support informed decision-making and long-term financial security.

# REYNOLDS COUNTY HIGHLIGHTS

## Reynolds County State Fair Farm Family – The Massie Family

The Massie family was among those honored during the 68th annual Missouri Farm Family Day, August 11th at the Missouri State Fair. The Massie family was selected as the Reynolds County Farm Family by University of Missouri Extension and the local Farm Bureau. Each year, the fair sets aside a day to recognize farm families from across the state that are active in their communities, involved in agriculture, and/or participate in local outreach and extension programs such as 4-H or FFA. The Massie family raises horses and cattle on their family farm while also maintaining full-time, off-farm employment.



# REYNOLDS COUNTY HIGHLIGHTS

## Missouri Century Farm

On June 28, 2025, the Reynolds County MU Extension recognized the Joel J. Dennison Family Farm as a Missouri Century Farm on the steps of the Reynolds County Courthouse.

In 1976, Missouri's Centennial Farm project awarded certificates to persons owning farms that had been in the same family for 100 years or more. The MU College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, and MU Extension planned a 10-year update in 1986 called the Century Farm program. Since then, the program has been an annual event, recognizing more than 100 farms each year.



# Reynolds County

## Missouri 4-H



10 volunteers contributed 56 hours of service, representing an estimated community value of \$1,928 in volunteer time (based on the national value of \$34.42/hour).

53 youth participants engaged across 12 sessions, totaling 13 hours of direct educational programming.

4 educational programs delivered in Reynolds County, reaching youth through hands-on, in-person learning experiences.



## Agriculture and Environment

### Agronomy Highlights

### Haley Schwantz, Agronomy Specialist

#### Reynolds County Grazing School

MU Extension Specialists Haley Schwantz, Eric Meusch, Jason Morris with NRCS Kim Overton and Mark Kennedy held a grazing school in Reynolds County with 17 participants. Debra Rayfield, Julie East, and Stephanie Schindler were key helpers in making sure all food and supplies were provided. This event was received well by attendees based on the grazing school survey reports. Thank you, Reynolds County Council and all office support, for helping promote this event!



#### Private Pesticide Applicator Trainings

certify crop producers for restricted use pesticides. MU Extension provides classes for these certification needs. Reynolds County has a total of 16 licensed Private Applicators. Currently there are 7 that will expire in 2027 (0 in 2026).

Two training methods offered:

1. One-on-one's: This personalized training offers an opportunity for the producer to be both trained to use RUPs and take advantage of a farm visit in one day.
2. Online: a total of 13 online PPATs were offered by Haley Schwantz in 2025 training 83 applicators.

**Soil testing** with the University of Missouri Extension is a tool that many producers in Reynolds County use to monitor fertility and pH levels for forage and crop production. **There were 51 interpretations of soil test reports by the Agronomy Field Specialist for 2025. This represents 7996.57 acres.**



**Success Story** As the Agronomy Field Specialist I have taken the time to help educate several producers in Reynolds County interested in furthering their knowledge of soil testing and how to interpret reports. I have seen **great improvement in soil management through continued communication.**



Haley Schwantz teaching Ellington High School students. Haley partnered with teacher Katie Neece in Spring 2025 to help introduce the agricultural industry

## Agriculture and Environment

### Horticulture Highlights

### Donna Aufdenberg, Horticulture Specialist

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

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

#### Popular Programs in 2025

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



Hands-on learning with container gardening

Master Gardeners (78 members from Cape Girardeau, Bollinger, Scott and Perry Counties) completed 2,596 hours valued at \$90,000 given to local communities through beautification, education, and service to others. Twenty-two gardeners complete Master Gardener Core training in 2025.



Demonstration Garden

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

### Horticulture

/ 'hôrdə , kəlCHər/

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

**900+**  
Participants in  
35+ Programs in  
the Southeast  
Region

**800+**  
One-on-One  
Education  
➤ Calls and  
Emails  
➤ Walk-ins

### Top Gardening Requests

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

**Garden Spade**  
Newsletter reaches  
over 2,556  
subscribers every  
month with a 9.6%  
increase in readership  
during 2025. Each  
issue shares practical,  
research-based  
information that is  
“Reliable, Responsive,  
and Relevant” to  
Missouri Gardeners.  
Subscribe to the  
garden spade at  
<https://extension.missouri.edu/counties/cape-girardeau> or click  
the QR code at the  
right.



## Agriculture and Environment

### Livestock Highlights

#### 2025 AT A GLANCE

In 2025, the MU Extension Livestock Program delivered comprehensive education and outreach to livestock producers, youth, and communities across Dent, Phelps, Pulaski, Crawford, Shannon, Reynolds, Carter, and Texas counties. Programming emphasized grazing management, livestock nutrition, youth development, value-added enterprises, and herd profitability.

- Grazing Schools held in 4 counties taught approximately 105 livestock producers the fundamentals of Management Intensive Grazing. **17 people attended the Grazing School in Reynolds County.**
- Show Me Quality Assurance events held for Dent, Phelps, Crawford, Shannon and Reynolds Counties trained youth on proper care of livestock. Other youth-oriented activities included Ozark Cattlemen's Beef Day in Salem and the Wurdack Education Day event.
- More than 190 producer consultations were conducted during the year, providing one-on-one information and advice on practical livestock management. **16 producers in Reynolds County had one-on-one consultations.**



### Eric Meusch, Livestock Specialist

#### Beef Herd Improvement

Beef herd improvement programming supported cow-calf producers through Cow College workshops, heifer development education, and participation in the Show Me Select Heifer Program. This program helps producers develop high-quality bred heifers sold through certified sales across the state. Participating producers sold heifers in sales in Joplin, Vienna and Farmington getting premium prices for their heifers. These outcomes demonstrate the economic value of applied Extension education focused on genetics, management, and marketing.

#### Grazing Management

Grazing management was a cornerstone of 2025 programming. Management Intensive Grazing Schools were delivered across the region, combining classroom instruction with on-farm demonstrations focused on forage utilization, stocking rate management, fencing systems, and water development. 96 producers participated in grazing schools held in Phelps, Pulaski, Texas and Reynolds counties in 2025.



## Health and Human Sciences

### Local Impact

### John Fuller, Human Development Specialist

#### Direct Reach

13 residents served through digital skills workshops

#### 6 Building Strong Families sessions delivered

#### Engagement

1 participant completed 100%  
1 participant returned to complete a missed session

#### Indirect Reach

Flyers: 1,800–2,500  
Facebook: 239  
Total: **2,000+**

#### Partnerships

Missouri Family Support Services  
Aging Matters  
Senior Planet

#### 2026 Coming Soon

Family Strengthening & Parenting  
Technology Education  
Tai Chi  
Brain Health  
Self-Care & Mental Health



## Health and Human Science

### Profiles and stories

### Leslie Davis, Nutrition Program Associate

#### SNAP Education

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Education or SNAP-Ed) brought \$11,419,598 in federal funds to Missouri in 2025 to support engagement with 70,722 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program recipients and eligible citizens.

Through direct education, newsletters, health fairs, food pantries, and the Show Me Nutrition helpline, Leslie reached 5183 indirect contacts in Iron and Reynolds Counties.

MU Extension nutrition educators work with individuals and groups in a variety of settings throughout the state to meet a wide range of needs. Whether reaching out to youth and adults through direct education or working with communities to promote healthy policies, systems and environments (PSE), our goal is to help participants make behavior changes to achieve lifelong health and fitness.

Often people tell us how the program has impacted their lives, even years after they have participated. Each day there are new stories that bring home the same important message: The MU Extension Family Nutrition Education Program makes a difference, a difference that means better health and fitness for a lifetime.

**2456** participants (both youth and adult) received education in Reynolds County in 2025.



#### 2025 Impact

During a July visit to the Ellington Nutrition Center, a senior who previously participated in the *Eat Smart, Live Strong* class shared that she uses the over-the-sink strainer distributed during the program almost daily. She noted that the reinforcement makes washing and preparing fruits and vegetables easier and emphasized that program reinforcements consistently help support her healthy food preparation habits.