



Extension
University of Missouri



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URBAN
WEST

ANNUAL
REPORTS

CLAY
JACKSON
PLATTE

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JACKSON



PLATTE



CLAY

Letter from Vice Chancellor

MU Office of Extension
and Engagement
University of Missouri

Vice Chancellor's Office
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Columbia, MO 65211
PHONE 573-882-2394
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December 2024

Dear county commissioners, elected leaders and friends of MU Extension and Engagement,

As we reflect on the past year, I want to express my deep gratitude for your support of MU Extension and for your partnership in enhancing the lives of Missourians.

Your support for MU Extension fuels Missouri's agriculture, strengthens families, prepares our youth and promotes the health, well-being and vitality of our communities. Over the past year, our programs have focused on addressing key needs throughout the state:

- **Expanding access to 4-H:** To make 4-H more accessible, we've introduced more in-school and after-school clubs, reducing barriers and creating opportunities for young Missourians to develop essential skills and leadership abilities.
- **Promoting economic development:** MU Extension is helping to create economic opportunities by working with individuals, supporting businesses in their growth and collaborating with communities to enhance local vibrancy. Through these efforts, we help bring new jobs, skills and possibilities to Missourians across the state.
- **Advancing health initiatives:** Our team of community health field specialists, covering every region of the state, works directly with local leaders to assess health needs and bring UM System resources and expertise to these communities, supporting healthier lives and stronger communities.
- **Supporting agriculture:** We're addressing critical challenges such as expanding access to fresh, locally grown food, supporting community and rooftop gardens, and teaching sustainable gardening practices. These efforts empower residents to connect with agriculture, improve food security, and contribute to greener, healthier neighborhoods.
- **Providing essential training:** Our continuing education programs prepare Missouri's firefighters and health care workers to meet the demands of their roles with the latest skills and knowledge, ensuring they are well-prepared to serve our communities.

As you read through this annual report, I hope you feel as proud as I do of the accomplishments we've achieved together. The dedication and professionalism of MU Extension's faculty and staff are inspiring, and I am grateful to work alongside them—and each of you—as we make Missouri a stronger, healthier and more vibrant place. Thank you for your continued support and partnership. Together, we are serving Missouri by delivering the University *for* Missouri.

Warm regards,

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



*"Serve Missouri.
Deliver Mizzou."*



Shatomi Luster-Edward
REGIONAL DIRECTOR



Tracey Sanders
URBAN REGIONS
Project/Program
Support Coordinator II



GK Callahan
URBAN WEST
Engagement Specialist



Joshua Shinn
URBAN WEST
Engagement Specialist



Lindsay Tarasovic
URBAN WEST
Engagement Specialist

OUR COMMUNITY

Every year Missourians turn to the University of Missouri (MU) Extension for practical knowledge, problem-solving, and guidance in navigating change. Serving as a key resource for informed decision-making, the Urban West region plays 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 Clay, Jackson, and Platte counties, 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 PROGRAMS/SERVICES ARE:

- › Business & Workforce Development
- › Community Development
- › Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) & Financial Literacy
- › Nutrition & Health Education
- › 4-H Youth Development
- › Horticulture & Agriculture Support
- › Community Health Initiatives

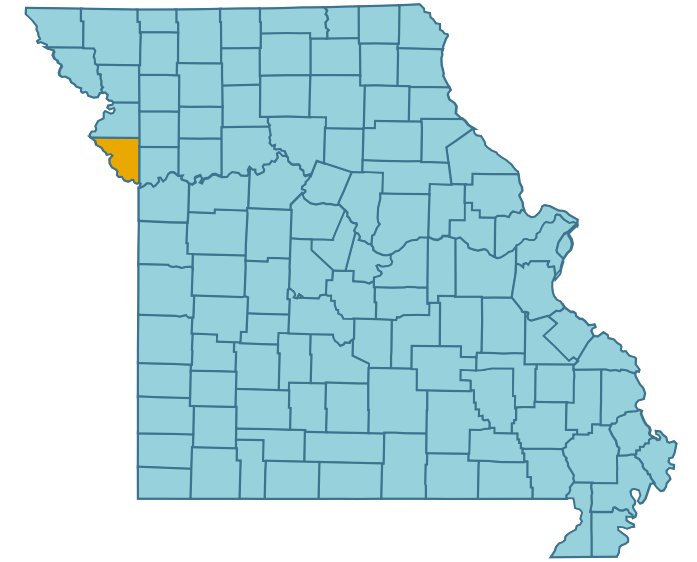
OUR COMMITMENT:

Each year, we reach approximately 35,000 people through direct educational services. The MU Extension Urban West region is committed to making a lasting impact by improving food safety and health, empowering youth, and advancing workforce development. While there is still much to be done, we remain dedicated to working alongside our community, fostering growth, and creating opportunities for all.

Extension Council Members - 2024

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- Chris Kempke**
Chris Kempke: chris@mohumanities.org
- Carolyn Vellar**
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DISTRICT MAP - Platte



Salaries/Benefits	\$27715.05
Travel	\$2220.00
Supplies/Services	\$1424.66
Rent	\$1500.00
Insurance/Surety Bonds	\$518.00
Professional Services	\$4097.73
Phone/Postage	\$758.92
Total:	\$38,234.36



Extension Council Members – 2024

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DISTRICT MAP – Clay



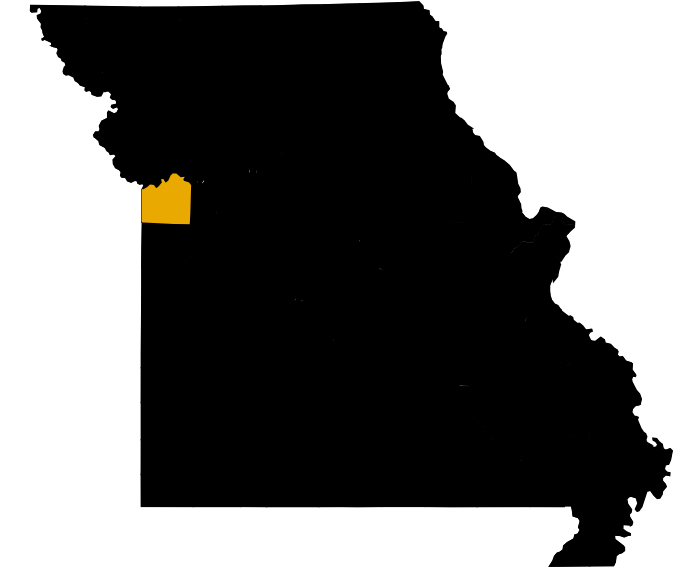
INCOME	AMOUNT
Clay County Commission	84,707
Local grants	275
Educational activities & services	1,253
USDA Nutrition Grant	48,360
Univ. of MO Extension faculty salary	393,120
Value of Volunteers (\$33.49/hr)	93,772
Total	621,487

EXPENSES	
Salaries & Benefits	57,797
Contracted services	3,231
Travel	3,216
Supplies / Postage	6,266
Printing / Publishing	1,400
Equipment / Furniture	0
Extension Council Operations	1,645
Total	73,555

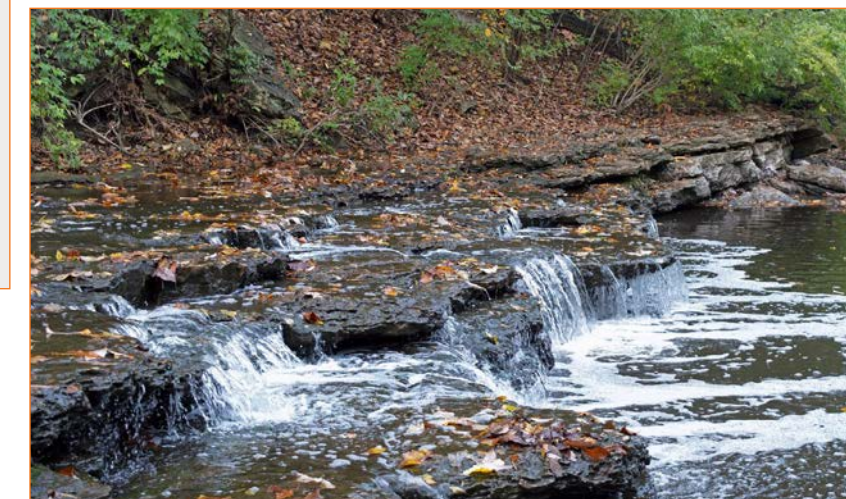
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DISTRICT MAP – Jackson



Salaries/Benefits	\$15,965.96
Travel	\$8,193.08
Supplies/Services	\$16,597.00
Rent	\$10,506.69
Printing/Copying	\$6,868.25
Insurance/Surety Bonds	\$1,366.74
Professional Services	\$11,399.17
Phone/Postage	\$976.22
Total:	\$71,877.11



2025 UM Systemwide Impact Data Sheets

Clay, Jackson, and Platte Counties



University of Missouri System
COLUMBIA | KANSAS CITY | ROLLA | ST. LOUIS

UM System Footprint in the area in 2024



FY24 area students

- students**
- 2,590 Pell grant recipients (aid year 2024)



Area employees and retirees

- 3,340 people employed by UM**
- 3,216 Campuses
 - 97 MU Health Care (includes additional employees gained via the recent integration of Capital Region Medical Center)
 - 27 UM System
- 1,005 UM retirees and beneficiaries
UM salary and retirement income: \$166.3 million
UM state tax revenue: \$6.2 million
UM federal tax revenue: \$25.3 million



Area alumni

- Selected school alumni**
- 1,231 Medicine
 - 2,418 Nursing
 - 2,212 Health Professions
 - 1,051 Dentistry
 - 1,108 Pharmacy
 - 50 Optometry
 - 223 Veterinary Medicine
 - 2,357 Agriculture
 - 6,692 Engineering
 - 3,840 Law
- Alumni teaching K-12**
- 2,463 teachers
 - 20.4% of all district teachers
 - 274 principals and administrators
 - 37.0% of all district principals and administrators



Area breakdown

MU

- students
- 23,369 alumni
- 232 employees

UMKC

- students
- 38,029 alumni
- 2,971 employees

Missouri S&T

- students
- 2,763 alumni
- 10 employees

UMSL

- students
- 839 alumni
- 3 employees



Area population: 1,081,338



Area services provided

- Health care (FY24)**
- 2,409 in-state patients seen at MU Health Care, with \$696,511 of uncompensated care
 - 2 in-state patients seen at UMSL Center for Eye Care with a statewide average of \$32.18 per patient in uncompensated care
 - 7,503 in-state patients seen at UMKC School of Dentistry with a statewide average of \$52.57 per patient in uncompensated care
 - MU Health Care's Missouri Telehealth Network recorded 955 visits to 474 patients having ZIP codes associated with the area
- Extension (2023)**
- 52,339 Total educational contacts from MU Extension to residents of the counties, including:
 - 24,270 contacts related to productive farming, better gardening, and managing natural resources
 - 14,028 contacts related to healthy eating and aging, strengthening families, personal finance, or youth development
 - 10,084 contacts related to starting businesses, developing community leaders, or renewing the local economy



Construction projects

- \$25.7 million remitted to 46 area vendors, for 152 projects



Area properties and offices

UMKC Volker Campus, UMKC Hospital Hill
MU Extension in: Clay, Jackson, Jackson - Kansas City, and Platte Counties

2025 UM Systemwide Impact Data Sheets

Clay, Jackson, and Platte Counties



University of Missouri System
COLUMBIA | KANSAS CITY | ROLLA | ST. LOUIS

UM System Statewide Footprint

Economic and Community Development Highlights

- In FY23, Business Development Specialists worked with small businesses and entrepreneurs statewide to create or retain 98,527 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 FY18 and FY23, UM System brought Missouri more than \$1.58 billion in federal and private research funds, funded primarily from outside the state, but spent within the state.





In FY24, UM System was issued 29 patents and filed 69 new U.S. patent applications.

- In FY24, the UM System awarded 707 design and construction project contracts throughout Missouri, for a total investment of \$287.3 million in the state.



In FY24, to improve access to medical and health related services, MU Health Care's Missouri Telehealth Network's Show-Me ECHO program provided 16,687 hrs of case-based instruction to 3,113 learners located in 105 of 114 Missouri counties and the city of St. Louis.

Education and Training Provided

 40,542 police, fire fighters, and medical professionals attending continuing education (2023)	 Agriculture and natural resource programs served 369,077 farmers and related businesses (2023)	 210,577 youth and stakeholder educational contacts in 4-H clubs, schools, camps and other programs (2023)
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Education Highlights

FY24 Financial Aid Awards

In FY24, 69.7% of the UM System's 79,014 students received financial aid totaling \$1.048 billion



UM System's MOREnet (Missouri Research and Education Network) provides internet connectivity, access, support and training to 58 higher education institutions (230,000 students), 484 K-12 school districts (830,000 students) and 134 public libraries (serving nearly 3 million Missourians) in 2023.

- 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.
- In 2024, over 12,400 Missourians accessed mobroadband.org, part of the UM System Broadband Initiative which helped the statewide build-out of high-speed internet infrastructure.

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 2024, 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

CLAY, JACKSON AND PLATTE COUNTIES



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: Labor Market

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 (\$)	
Report Location	Clay \$62,585 😞
	Jackson \$73,312 😞
	Platte \$62,735 😞
	Missouri \$62,528 😞
	\$70,070

Data Source: US Department of Commerce, [US Bureau of Economic Analysis Regional Economic Accounts](#), 2007-2022.

Labor Force Participation

The labor force participation rate is a measure of an economy's active workforce and includes people who are employed and those seeking employment. According to the 2015 – 2019 American Community Survey, of the 852,352 persons of working age in the report area, 68.03% are included in the labor force. This rate exceeds the Missouri labor force participation rate of 62.90%.

Labor Force Participation Rate	
Report Location	Clay 69.79%
	Jackson 67.09%
	Platte 70.19%
	Missouri 62.9%
	68.03%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, [American Community Survey](#), 2018-22.

CHALLENGE 2: Educational Access and Excellence: Educational Attainment

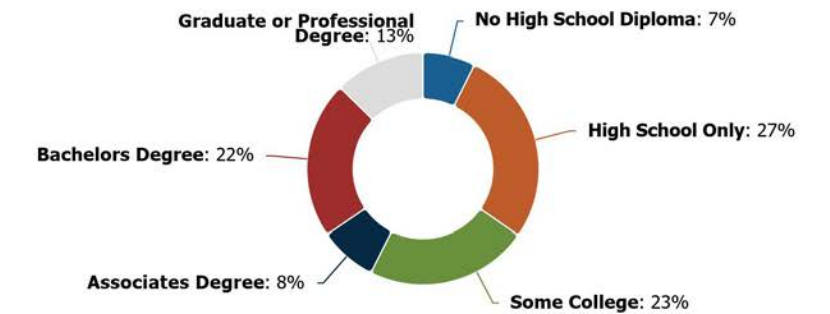
Adult Educational Attainment

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, 22.72% of adults have at least some college education and 29.95% of adults have an associate's level degree or higher. However, 27.38% stopped their formal educational attainment after completing high school, and 7.31% of adults did not complete high school.

No High School Diploma	
Report Location	Clay 6.20%
	Jackson 8.25%
	Platte 3.63%
	Missouri 8.69%
	7.31%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, [American Community Survey](#), 2018-22.



Data Source: US Census Bureau, [American Community Survey](#), 2018-22.

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 3,325 deaths of despair, or 45.70 deaths per 100,000 population between 2011 and 2017. This rate is lower than the state rate of 52.01 per 100,000, and represents an increase of 12.37% since the 2001-2007 report period.

Mortality Rate, 2014-2020	
Report Location	Clay 42.91 😞
	Jackson 47.71 😞
	Platte 38.48 😞
	Missouri 52.01 😞
	45.70

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

Poor Mental Health Days

Self-reported mental health status is a widely used measure of health-related quality of life. In 2018, adults in the report area averaged of 5.4 mentally unhealthy days per month, which is higher than the state average of 5.3. This measure of mental health status has worsened since 2014, when adults in the report area averaged 4.3 mentally unhealthy days per month.

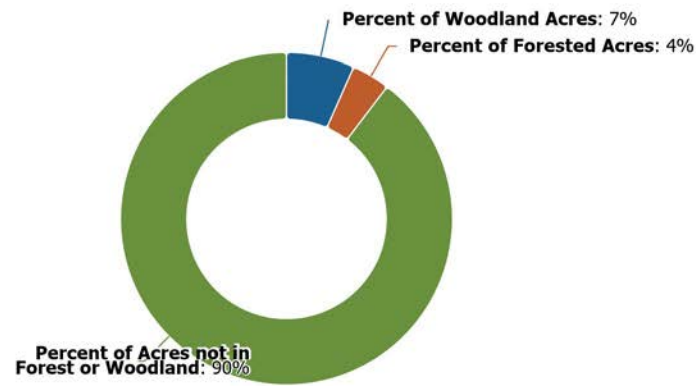
Average Poor Mental Health Days per Month, 2018	
Report Location	Clay 5.4 😞
	Jackson 5.5 😞
	Platte 4.6 😞
	Missouri 5.3 😞
	5.4

Data Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System](#), Accessed via [County Health Rankings](#), 2021.

CHALLENGE 4: Agricultural Growth & Stewardship: Resource Management

Forested, Woodland & Non-forested Acres

Sustainable management of forests and woodlands and harvesting of mature trees support the state's \$10.3 billion forest products industries. Forests have a closed canopy (>80% cover) permitting little light to penetrate to the ground below. They consist of several overlapping layers of trees, with a mid-story and understory comprising a variety of shade-tolerant shrubs and a sparse layer of soft-stemmed plants. Woodlands have a more open canopy (30-80% cover), and their sparse, woody mid-story allows more sunlight to reach the ground. This light permits the growth of a dense ground cover containing a variety of wildflowers, grasses and sedges. Fire plays a large role in maintaining woodland habitats.



Data Source: Multi-Resolution Land Characteristics Consortium, [National Land Cover Database](#).



Rotational Grazing

A planned rotational grazing system allows time for vegetation to rest and recover before being grazed again. In 2017, nearly 16,000 Missouri farms reported practicing rotational or management-intensive grazing. With 11 million acres of row crops and nearly 2 million grazing livestock animals (mainly cattle), Missouri is well suited to capitalize on the grazing potential of cover crops. In addition to generating more income, grazing cover crops can have a positive impact on soil health. Manure, hoof action and the root responses that grazing elicits stimulate soil biological activity and lead to healthier soil and healthier crops.

Percent of Operations Utilizing Rotational Grazing

10.34%	Clay	11.28%
	Jackson	9.52%
	Platte	10.31%
	Missouri	16.46%

Data Source: US Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service, [Census of Agriculture](#), 2022.



4-H IN 2024

Goals and Scope

4-H is dedicated to engaging youth as valued contributors in their communities through partnerships with caring adults. As part of the University of Missouri Extension, it is publicly supported by county, state, and federal governments while also leveraging private resources. 4-H serves youth of ages 5-18 in Missouri, offering a range of programs, including clubs, camps, contests, and school-based initiatives, to cultivate leadership, personal growth, and civic engagement in both urban and rural areas. The overarching vision is for young people and adults to learn, grow, and collaborate as agents of positive change.

Target Audience

The program serves Missouri youth across diverse settings, encompassing ages 5-18, with special initiatives for younger children (e.g., Clover Kids), high schoolers exploring career paths, and community-wide events for all ages.

“By fostering strategic partnerships and focusing on impactful, hands-on learning experiences, 4-H continues to empower Missouri’s youth as future leaders and contributors to their communities”





Key Accomplishments of 2024

Measurable Impacts and Significant Achievements

Program Reach:

- › Community Club Members: 223
- › In-School Clubs: 56
- › After-School Clubs: 108
- › Special Interest Clubs: 62
- › School Enrichment Programs: 1,979 students reached
- › Adult Volunteers: 192; Youth Volunteers: 33

STEM Education Highlights:

- › The Embryology Program engaged over 1,200 K-8 students in 50 classrooms across Clay, Jackson, and Platte Counties. Students learned about chicken life cycles, STEM concepts, and hands-on science applications.
- › Summer STEM Camp at UMKC exposed 10 participants to aerospace, virtual reality, and robotics, enhancing their technical skills and understanding of career pathways in STEM fields.

Healthy Living and Skill Development:

- › The Snack Attack program educated 20 elementary students about nutrition and healthy snack preparation.
- › The Carver STEM Club served 496 participants with initiatives in entomology, aerospace, and healthy living, improving students' eating habits, physical activity, and academic skills.

Community Engagement and Fundraising:

- › The Platte County Fair raised over \$4,000 and attracted approximately 1,500 visitors, boosting awareness and support for 4-H programs.
- › The 4-H Holiday Event introduced the program to new families, resulting in five parents signing up for more information.



Key Partnerships 4-H collaborated with numerous organizations to expand its impact:

- › Missouri 4-H State Office: Curriculum development and STEM integration.
- › UMKC: Provided campus tours, workshops, and access to virtual reality and 3D printing labs.
- › Local Schools and Organizations: Supported classroom initiatives, after-school programs, and leadership workshops.
- › Community Organizations: Partnerships with Arc Construction, Costco, Price Choppers, and the Kansas City Zoo enriched program delivery and outreach.

Participant Success Stories

- › **Carver STEM Club:** A student reflected, "Participating in aerospace projects made me dream of becoming an engineer." Students applied math and reading skills to practical tasks like scaling recipes and building model rockets.
- › **Mock Interviews:** A high school senior said, "The feedback I received helped me secure my first internship, boosting my confidence for the future."
- › **Platte County Fair:** An organizer noted, "2024 exceeded expectations; it wasn't just better, it was a huge success."

Metrics and Data Highlights

- › **Youth Engagement:** Over 9,000 students participated in enrichment programs, with significant focus on STEM, healthy living, and career readiness.
- › **Economic Impact:** Fundraising events like the Platte County Fair generated community support exceeding \$4,000.
- › **Learning Outcomes:** Across programs, students demonstrated measurable growth in STEM knowledge, life skills, and leadership abilities.



HORTICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT

Provides urban farmers, gardeners, and industry with research-based horticulture education through workshops, courses, webinars, newsletters, and demonstration plantings. Topics include ornamental, fruit, and vegetable gardening, native plants, integrated pest management (IPM), beneficial insects, honey bees, and pollinator stewardship.

Extension Master Gardeners

Offers advanced horticulture training for Missourians, preparing volunteers to share research-based gardening knowledge with the public. EMGs educate through adult and youth programs, demonstration gardens, garden tours, a speakers bureau, videos, and a gardening hotline (816-833-TREE [8733]; mggkc.hotline@gmail.com).

MISSOURI MASTER NATURALISTS

In partnership with the Missouri Department of Conservation, this program enhances understanding and management of natural resources. Volunteers educate the public and participate in ecological stewardship activities.

EXTENSION GARDEN STEWARD

A beginner-friendly, five-week program covering site assessment, vegetable gardening, ornamentals, entomology, pollinator habitats, and environmental stewardship.

MISSOURI MASTER POLLINATOR STEWARD

Focuses on pollinator conservation, teaching participants about pollination, honey bees, native pollinators, and habitat improvement through hands-on activities.

Additional Programs and Collaborations: Soil Testing, Ag Business & Policy, Community Development, Labor & Workforce Development, Media Engagement

Program Impacts Summary

VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTIONS

Active Volunteers: 459 (including active, Emeriti, and newly trained).

Volunteer Service: 24,942 hours, valued at \$835,308 (2024 Independent Sector rate: \$33.49/hour).

Volunteer Education: 3,954 hours of continuing education.



18 Broadway pantry garden: raised beds managed by 12 teams of local business volunteers overlooking the heart of downtown Kansas City.
Image: T. Reall

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Food Donations: 14,672 pounds (7.3 tons) of fresh produce, providing 44,016 servings to local food pantries.

Program Events: 99 events with 2,941 participants.

Direct Outreach: 51,572 individuals served. (274,631 indirect outreach contacts)

Media Reach: 731 mentions in 256 outlets with 1.3+ billion impressions.

Educational Videos: 97 videos publicly available, with 17,751 views and 653 subscribers.

Community Partners: Collaborated with 86 organizations.

PROGRAM RESULTS

Extension Master Gardeners of Greater Kansas City

Volunteer Impact: 13,102 service hours and 1,337 education hours from 256 active members.

Public Outreach: 12,000 direct participants and 113,000 indirect participants through 76 events and partner activities. 12 public library exhibits with an estimated reach of 150,000.

Key Activities: 34 Speakers Bureau presentations with 740 attendees. 610 questions answered via the Hotline. 5 children participated in the Garden 'n Grow program, and over 1000 children were impacted by the Urban Green Dreams program for urban core schools. 24 educational videos created, including 15 #TuesdayTips and 9 "Kids Ask Dr. Bug" videos (17,700 views). Website Engagement included 270,000 visits (64,931 unique visitors) to the MGGKC webpage.

Food Donations

EMGs grew, harvested, and donated 8,929 pounds of produce to local food pantries.

Two downtown, grant-funded pantry gardens managed by 12 local business volunteer groups yielded 6,110 pounds of produce.

Missouri Master Naturalists (MMN)

Volunteer Impact: 11,768 service hours and 2,617 advanced training hours from 141 active members.

Activities: Native plant care, invasive species removal, seed collection, stream cleanups, and bluebird house builds. The 2024 training included 30 participants.

AmeriCorps Seniors (RSVP)

Program expanded to Clay, Jackson, and Platte counties. 37 volunteers contributed 72.25 service hours.

Garden Hour with MU Extension

Weekly Wednesday webinars reached 9,356 Missourians, providing practical gardening and environmental tips.

Media Engagement

Published the "Kids Ask Dr. Bug" column in the Kansas City Gardener magazine (~100,000 readers/year) and the Garden Spade Newsletter (~27,708 readers/year).

Covered the 2024 periodical cicada emergence, achieving 731 media mentions with a 1.3+ billion reach. Featured in outlets such as National Geographic, Smithsonian, and USA Today.

Social media posts are made on Instagram, Facebook, X/Twitter, BlueSky, and YouTube (as @ MUExtBugnGarden or MU Extension - Bug n' Garden).

Awards Received

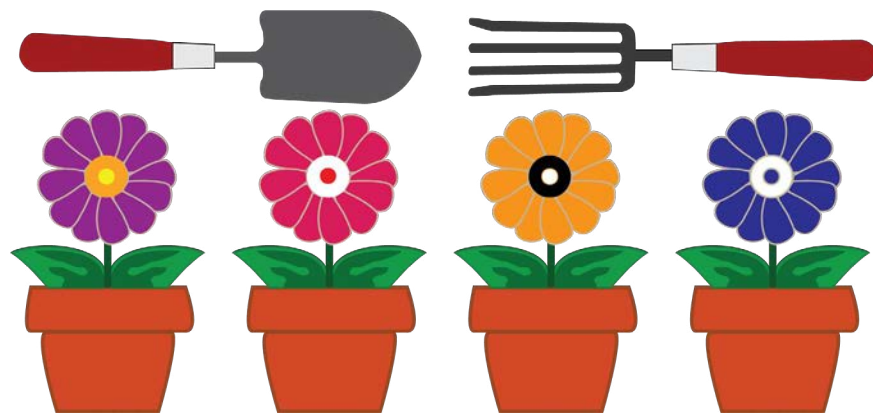
MU Extension Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Award, Missouri Master Gardener Association (MOMGA) Large Chapter of the Year, MOMGA Large Chapter Project of the Year, MOMGA Large Chapter Member of the Year.

HORTICULTURE PROGRAM IN CLAY AND PLATTE COUNTIES PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Horticulture Program in Clay and Platte Counties is primarily centered on Consumer Horticulture with some Commercial Horticulture. Homeowner and gardener support is emphasized, with citizen education and research-based problem solving being the primary focal points of the Field Specialist in Horticulture's activities. Soil test results interpretation is a major area of activity. The specialist interacts with the communities through presentations, electronic mail, and telephonic communications. He supports the Platte County Master Gardener chapter with advice and guidance. Other activities include supporting events in the counties and regions served, serving as board secretary on the Clay County and Platte County Soil and Water Conservation District Boards, and completing other projects assigned by the regional director.

Key Accomplishments:

- › Established a chapter of University of Missouri Extension Master Gardeners in Platte County.
- › Conducted a Extension Master Gardener training course in Platte County. Ten people completed the training, eight of which joined the Platte County Master Gardener chapter.
- › Collected farmers' market pricing data from the markets in Parkville, Smithville, Gladstone, Liberty (2), Kearney, Excelsior Springs, Lawson, and Holt. The pricing data collected was entered into the Missouri Department of Agriculture's Farmers' Market data base and made available to producers statewide.
- › Conducted public informational programs at the Excelsior Springs Farmers' Market (3), Liberty Farmers' Market, Dorothy Day Cabin (3), and Weston Bend State Park. Presented a program on turfgrass management, soil testing, and fertilization for the Weatherby Lake Environmental Committee.
- › Participated in safety programs at Platte City High School and West Platte High School, with an emphasis on teaching students to safely navigate around farm equipment on the roadways.
- › Assisted in securing greenhouse space for the Platte County Extension Master Gardener chapter.
- › Served on the planning committee for the Great Plains Growers Conference
- › Authored a paper in support of GK Callahan's *Where Have All the Pheasants Gone?* art show. An offshoot of the paper preparation was an abstract that resulted in an invitation to present a talk titled *Can Pheasants and Agriculture Coexist in Missouri?* at the Missouri Natural Resources Conference in February 2025.



Course Participant Success Stories:

FROM THE PLATTE COUNTY EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER:

"The information was so helpful. So grateful for this opportunity!"

"This was so enjoyable. I'm so glad I did this."

"I really appreciated the handouts that were available."

Metric and Data:

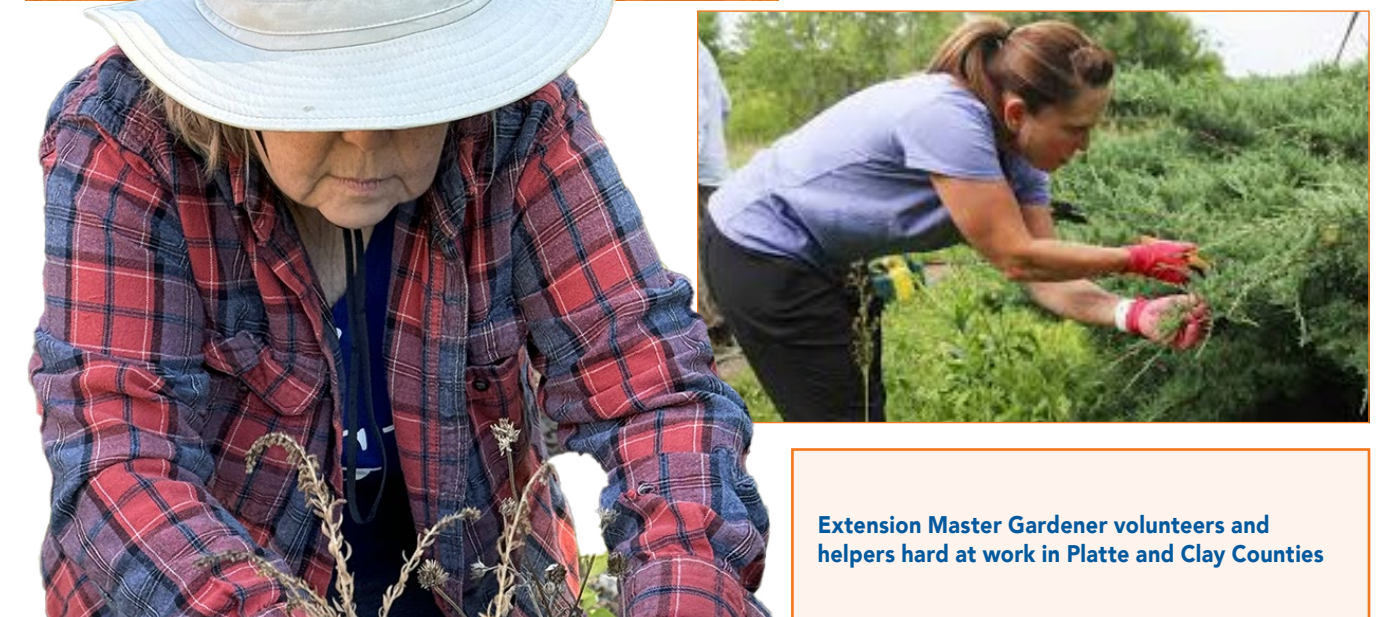
Extension Master Gardener - 10 graduates of the Platte City MG training course

Partnerships:

Mid-Continent Public Library in Platte City

Clay County SWCD

Platte County SWCD



Extension Master Gardener volunteers and helpers hard at work in Platte and Clay Counties

MISSOURI MASTER NATURALISTS:

OSAGE TRAILS CHAPTER

In partnership with the Missouri Department of Conservation, this program enhances understanding and management of natural resources. Volunteers educate the public and participate in ecological stewardship activities.

Volunteer Contributions The Osage Trails Chapter of Missouri Master Naturalists contributed 11,768 service hours (valued at \$394,110) and 2,617 advanced training hours in 2024, supported by 141 active members. A training program was conducted with 30 participants. Members undertook diverse activities including maintaining native plant gardens, supporting native seed collection, removing invasive species, hosting local stream cleanups, organizing bluebird house builds, and much more. In partnership with 26 community organizations, these efforts significantly enhanced ecological stewardship in the Kansas City area.

Advanced Training Sessions Chapter members Training Sessions:

- › Doug Tallamy, Co-founder of Homegrown National Parks (organized by the Missouri River Bird Observatory).
- › Adam McLane, Missouri Director for The Nature Conservancy.
- › Mark Glenshaw, expert on Forest Park owls.
- › Joanna and Eric Rueter, presenting "Geology for Ozark Naturalists."
- › Larry Rizzo, leading a hike at KC Rocky Point Glade.

Media Recognition Chapter Efforts Media Highlighted:

- › Jeanette Hartshorn (class of 2017) was featured in the Fall 2024 issue of The Nature Conservancy magazine for her citizen science contributions.
- › Jim Hinds (class of 2017) appeared on the Flatlands KC podcast on October 18, 2024, discussing citizen science with Cara Coates (MDC).
- › Mary Smead (class of 2012) collaborated with Lakeside Nature Center to organize a trail run benefiting trail repair and maintenance.
- › JL Johnson (class of 2022) was recognized in newsletters for his work with the Missouri River Bird Observatory.

Special Projects and Initiatives:

- › 24 members collected 72 pounds of native seeds from 18 plant species at Dunn Ranch Prairie.
- › The Diversity, Engagement, and Inclusion Committee collaborated with Kansas City communities to support ecological improvements in urban neighborhoods.
- › The DE&I committee also awarded three training scholarships to new members in 2024.
- › The Stream Team (#4956) conducted multiple water quality tests and organized training events for new members.
- › Bluebird house builds were led at Wings Over Weston, Kemper Education Center, and other locations.

Focus Areas

- › The 2024 theme emphasized Homegrown National Parks, encouraging members to register their properties and display signs to promote the initiative.
- › Members received training through Missouri's Dark Sky Program collaborating with Prof. Vayujeet Gokhale (Truman State University) to address light pollution in Kansas City.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Anita B Gorman Discovery Center	Kansas City WildLands
Blue River Watershed Association	Lincoln University Extension
Bridging the Gap	Little Blue River Property (Partnership in work)
Burr Oak Woods	Loess Bluffs NWR
Burroughs Audubon Society of Greater Kansas City	Martha Lafite Thompson Nature Sanctuary
Deep Roots KC	Missouri Department of Conservation
Dunn Ranch Prairie	Missouri Prairie Foundation/Snowball Hill Prairie
George Owens Nature Park	Missouri River Bird Observatory
Heartland Conservation Alliance	Missouri River Relief
Heartland Tree Alliance	Osage Trails Chapter Stream Team
Jackson County Parks and Recreation/Kemper Outdoor Education Center (*)	Platte County Land Trust
Kansas City Parks and Recreation/Lakeside Nature Center (*)	Powell Gardens
	University of Missouri Extension
	Wild Souls

The chapter's dedication continues to expand its impact, fostering a stronger connection between natural resource conservation and community engagement.

For more information about the Osage Trails chapter, please visit <https://osagetrails.com/>.

For more information about the Missouri Master Naturalist program, please visit <https://extension.missouri.edu/programs/missouri-master-naturalist>



The 2024 Osage Trails Chapter Graduating Class

An October intern training session at the Anita Gorman Nature Center, KC.

EXTENSION MASTER GARDENERS OF GREATER KANSAS CITY

The MU Extension Master Gardener (EMG) program offers advanced horticulture training for Missourians, preparing volunteers to share research-based gardening knowledge with the public. EMGs educate through adult and youth programs, demonstration gardens, garden tours, a speakers bureau, videos, and a gardening hotline (816-833-TREE [8733]; mggkc.hotline@gmail.com).

Volunteer Outreach and Participant Engagement:

- › Service: 256 active chapter members contributed 13,102 service hours (valued at \$438,786).
- › Reach: Approximately 12,000 participants actively engaged in EMG programming, with 113,000 individuals indirectly participating through 76 special events and partnerships.
- › Speakers Bureau: Delivered 34 presentations to 740 participants.
- › Hotline: Answered 610 questions.
- › Children's Programming:
 - Garden 'n Grow: Taught five young gardeners over 10 weeks.
 - Urban Green Dreams: Reached over 1,000 children in urban core schools.
- › Public Events: Engaged the public through fairs, farmers' markets, and 76 special events, including:
 - Participated in Watkins Mill's Celebrate the Arrival of Spring.
 - Hosted the first annual MGGKC Spring Fling with garden displays and information on programs.
 - Hosted Girls on the Run at Children's Mercy Hospital Garden.
 - Participated in Bee's Brew/ Wornall House Museum Garden, displays and literature on bee conservation.
 - Conducted tours for youngsters and their parents at Atkins Johnson Children's Garden Day.
 - Engaged adults and children with a flower anatomy activity at the Lakeside Bugs Extravaganza.
 - Hosted a Butterfly and Bee Puddler Class at Blue Springs Historical Museum Garden, where participants created puddler habitats.
 - Represented EMG programming at the Big Shoal Country Fair.
 - Engaged all ages at Kansas City Community Garden's Beanstalk Garden's Fall Family Festival.

Website and Social Media:

- › 270,000 visits to the MGGKC website (64,931 unique visitors).
- › 17,700 views on the MUE Bug n' Garden YouTube channel, featuring 24 videos:
 - 15 #TuesdayTip gardening videos.
 - 9 "Kids Ask Dr. Bug" videos.
- › The Video Production Team added closed captioning to all videos.
- › Launched a new Instagram account: [@muextmaggkc](https://www.instagram.com/muextmaggkc).

Library Displays:

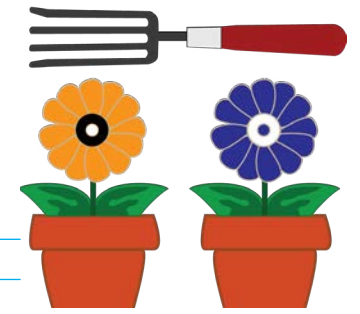
- › Participated in 12 exhibits, with an estimated reach of 150,000 visitors.



(Opposite page) Urban Rangers and school children working in the Urban Green Dreams schoolyard gardens. Image: T. Gatlin
Garden 'n Grow participants looking for insects and harvesting crops. Image: D. Johnson

Food Donations and New Initiatives:

- › Grew, harvested, and donated 8,929 pounds of produce to local food pantries.
- › 17 demonstration and partnership gardens supported food security and environmental stewardship initiatives.
- › Introduced new projects, including:
 - A hügelkultur bed at Manheim Garden.
 - Vertical gardening structures at Urban Green Dreams.



Recognition and Awards:

- › MGGKC won all three MOMGA Excellence Awards (large chapter category):
 - Project of the Year: Blue Springs Historical Museum Garden.
 - EMG of the Year: Marcia Schulz.
 - Chapter of the Year: MGGKC.
- › Urban Green Dreams team received the MU Extension Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Award.

Special Events and Acknowledgements:

- › Held signature events, including the Spring Fling and Gardeners' Gathering to showcase projects and engage the public.
- › Celebrated milestones:
 - Project Living Proof concluded its partnership.
 - The Harvesters Demonstration Garden celebrated 20 years of service before transitioning its materials for repurposing.
 - Added Manheim Garden as a new partnership site.

Training and Professional Development:

- › Chapter members honed gardening skills participating in 1,337 continuing education hours.
- › Several Extension Master Gardeners of Greater Kansas City attended the MOMGA State Conference in St. Joseph.
- › The Urban Green Dreams team attended Lincoln University's Train the Trainer Conference and the 2024 Arbor Foundation Community Forestry Conference.

For more information about the MU Extension Master Gardeners of Greater Kansas City chapter, please visit <https://www.mggkc.org/>.

For more information about the MU Extension Master Gardener program, please visit <https://extension.missouri.edu/programs/extension-master-gardener>.

Program Overview

Workforce challenges persist as a critical issue for Missouri. Key concerns include stagnant growth, an aging workforce, changing job demands, a widening skills gap, and the need for workforce development reform. To address these priorities, MU Extension's Labor & Workforce Development program equips Missourians with the skills and knowledge to meet the demands of the 21st-century workforce.

In the Urban West Region, Labor and Workforce Development Specialist Matt Pezold leads efforts to expand the workforce pipeline by collaborating with local schools, chambers of commerce, and regional organizations. His initiatives include providing tailored workforce data, career pathway guidance for high school students, leadership training, and supporting livable-wage job creation through regional training programs.

Impact and Reach

Urban West Region

- › 1,082 Direct Contacts: Through courses and programming.
- › 73 Sessions: Delivered across 15 locations.

Statewide Reach

- › 2,754 Direct Contacts: Engaged through courses and programming.
- › 597,800 Indirect Contacts: Through resources, newsletters, and handouts.
- › 94 Sessions: Across Missouri.

Key Partnerships and Initiatives

- › **Missouri Works Initiative (MWI):** This initiative focuses on expanding access to livable wage jobs for veterans, women, and underserved groups. This initiative partners with Google, JE Dunn, and various community organizations to provide paid training, certifications, and tools. In 2025, the goal is to train 80 community members.
- › **North Kansas City Public Schools Career Pathways Industry Council:** A forward-thinking initiative preparing students for post-graduation success. After presenting at a council meeting, Matt Pezold joined their industry council to assist with career pathway expansion.
- › **Raytown Public Schools Career Pathway Committee:** Similar to North Kansas City, Raytown has begun to develop its own career pathways. Matt actively participates in industry and data committees.
- › **Mid-Continent Public Libraries:** A region-wide partner, libraries provide venues for workforce programming and labor law sessions, enhancing community access to resources.
- › **Truman Habitat for Humanity:** Collaboration introduced workforce programming, which led to tangible career outcomes.

Success Stories

North Kansas City Workforce Presentation

- › Insights from Matt's presentation empowered the school's Industry Council to strategically plan workforce development over the next five years.

Career Pathway Exploration: Skilled Trades

- › A Habitat for Humanity participant completed MWI training and secured a skilled trade job with excellent benefits.

Smithville Workforce Presentation

- › Connected with Smithville High School's Career Pathway Coordinator to assist nearly 100 students in interview preparation. Students reported increased confidence in interview skills, attire, and communication.

UMKC Labor and Leadership Courses

- › Participants developed stronger leadership and communication skills, appreciating the value of leadership across various settings.
- › The Globalization and Workers course expanded student awareness of economic and social class dynamics, inspiring careers in advocacy and law.



North Kansas City Public Schools Career Pathways Industry Council Presentation



Labor History Course (Jackson County)



Beginning Farmer Program for Veterans and Socially Disadvantaged



Labor History Course (Clay County)



Clay County Commissioner Presentation

COMMUNITY ARTS PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Community Arts Program is a collaborative initiative among MU Extension, the University of Missouri, and various Missouri communities, aimed at promoting arts-based economic and community development. The arts enhance community belonging, bridge-building, reflection, and skill development, while also making significant contributions to Missouri's economy. Through planning, programming, and research, the program assists communities in becoming vibrant places to live, work, and play. In 2024, the program strengthened the communities of Kansas City by fostering belonging, contribution, leadership, and vitality.

Belonging

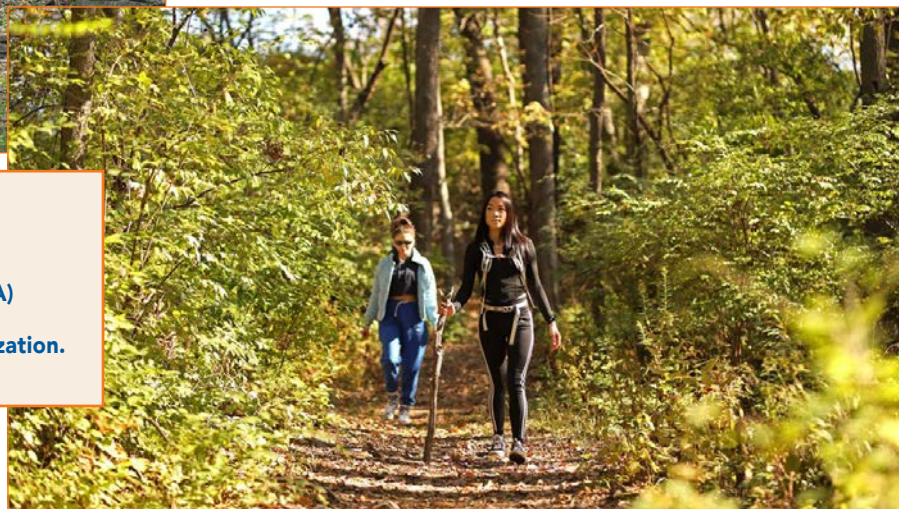
- › **Englewood Arts Mural:** In collaboration with Englewood Arts, the WinC Inclusion Center, and UMKC Fine Arts students, this mural honors the legacy of Serman and Anderson, a prominent LGBTQ couple. Community members shared their stories and helped with the painting during Englewood Art's Third Friday Art Walk in May. The mural was unveiled at Englewood PRIDE in June 2024.
- › **Show-Me Neighborhood Art Week:** This inaugural statewide event featured 73 art installations across all Missouri counties, showcasing mediums such as murals, quilts, and sculptures. Over 1,100 participants voted in a virtual awards ceremony for "audience favorite" and "best in show."
- › **ReArts Fest:** In partnership with Englewood Arts and Habitat for Humanity, this free two-day festival in September celebrated art vendors, live performances, food trucks, and a community art project called "Bloom" by local artist Aimee Jacobson.



Dorothy Day Cabin Artistry Residency

Neighborhood Leadership Academy (NLA)

North Terrace Lake/Kessler Park Revitalization.



Contribution

- › **Arts Asset Mapping:** In collaboration with ArtsKC and regional arts councils, this initiative identifies overlooked arts assets in the Kansas City Metro Area. Surveys and focus groups uncovered artists, venues, public art, and festivals in Jackson, Clay, and Johnson counties, with ongoing efforts in Wyandotte County.
- › **MO Health Back-to-School Event:** In August 2024, MU Extension teamed up with Our Healthy Jackson County and Habitat for Humanity to provide nearly 100 community members with free health screenings, 4-H STEAM art activities, and wellness resources, promoting back-to-school readiness leadership.
- › **Neighborhood Leadership Academy (NLA):** This statewide, hybrid-accessible program provides 13 weeks of training in fostering inclusive and effective community leadership. In October, Field Specialist Elena Stephenson co-facilitated a workshop on inclusivity in leadership with colleagues, emphasizing the empowerment of community development leaders.

Vitality

- › **North Terrace Lake/Kessler Park Revitalization:** MU Extension, in collaboration with Kansas City Parks and Recreation and the Confluence Design Team, is revitalizing North Terrace Lake in historic Kessler Park. Supported by a grant from the Missouri Department of Conservation, this project incorporates community input on safety, trail preservation, and public art experiences, including an interactive scavenger hunt.
- › **Dorothy Day Cabin Artist Residency:** The inaugural two-week residency, hosted in Platte County's historic Dorothy Day Cabin, featured regional artist Rachele Gardner-Roe. Her time there resulted in poetry and sculptures for her 2025 exhibition at the Albrecht-Kemper Museum of Art. MU Extension plans to host annual spring and fall residencies, with the next artist call launching in January 2025.

"Through partnerships, innovative programming, and community engagement, the Community Arts Program continues to enhance lives, celebrate cultural heritage, and foster economic vitality"



Field Specialist Elena Stephenson leading an arts asset mapping session at Johnson County Community College

Third Friday Artwalk in Kansas City, KS where community surveys were distributed

MO Health Back to School Event in August

6 Traits of an Inclusive Leader from NLA Inclusive Communities presentation October, 2024.



Kansas City Metropolitan Tax Coalition The University of Missouri Extension offers free tax preparation and financial education through the IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) programs.

According to the IRS, one in five people does not take full advantage of available tax credits. Claiming specific tax credits and deductions can reduce the amount owed or lead to a larger refund. These incentives aim to alleviate poverty.

In addition to helping individuals save money through free tax preparation, the VITA and TCE programs raise awareness and promote the use of these essential tax credits.

The VITA program targets taxpayers with low to moderate incomes—\$64,000 or less in 2024. The TCE program has no income restrictions and is available to taxpayers aged 60 and older. Our focus is on assisting taxpayers who can benefit the most from tax credits, particularly families with children, seniors, and individuals with disabilities. The tax program serves six counties in the Kansas City area: Cass, Clay, Jackson, and Platte in Missouri, as well as Johnson and Wyandotte in Kansas.

The University of Missouri Extension works with partners in the Kansas City Metro Tax Coalition (KCMTC) to operate the VITA and TCE programs. KCMTC is a group of educators, community service agencies, and neighborhood organizations. Coalition members provide space, staff support, volunteers, resources, promotion, and referrals. Taxpayers receive assistance from volunteers trained and certified by the IRS based on their roles. Volunteers manage tax sites, prepare taxes, and address taxpayer inquiries.

Our Partners

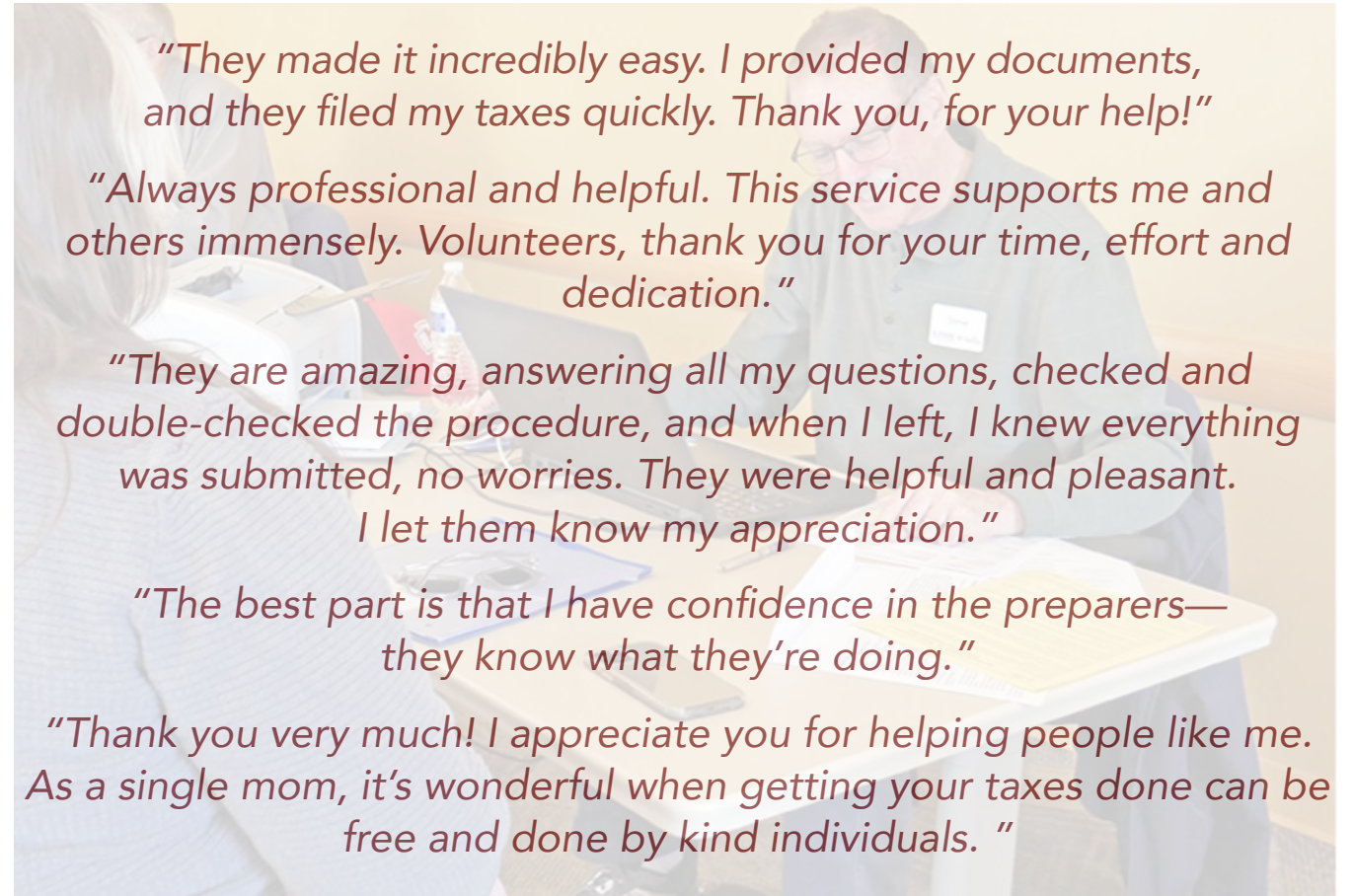
- ❖ AVENUE OF LIFE
- ❖ BELTON SENIOR CENTER
- ❖ CHOUTEAU SQUARE TOWERS
- ❖ COMMUNITY AMERICA CREDIT UNION (WITH LTX TAX SERVICES)
- ❖ COMMUNITY SERVICES LEAGUE
- ❖ EL CENTRO INC.
- ❖ GUADALUPE CENTERS INC.
- ❖ IVANHOE NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL
- ❖ KANSAS CITY KANSAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE
- ❖ KC SHEPHERD'S CENTER
- ❖ K-STATE EXTENSION
- ❖ LIBERTY SILVER CENTER
- ❖ LOCAL INVESTMENT COMMISSION (LINC)
- ❖ MAPLE WOODS METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE
- ❖ OPERATION BREAKTHROUGH
- ❖ THE PALMER CENTER
- ❖ ROCKHURST UNIVERSITY
- ❖ UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI KANSAS CITY
- ❖ UNITED WAY OF GREATER KANSAS CITY 2-1-1

UMKC tax site coordinator Kim Luken, with students and volunteers



As of September 30, 2024, the **University of Missouri Extension and the KC Metro Tax Coalition** assisted **5,105** individuals in filing their taxes for **free** this year. The estimated total refunds amount to nearly **\$4.5 million**, along with **\$1.5 million** in tax credits. This achievement was made possible through the generosity and hard work of approximately **200 volunteers** and **25 community partners**.

TAXPAYER FEEDBACK



"They made it incredibly easy. I provided my documents, and they filed my taxes quickly. Thank you, for your help!"

"Always professional and helpful. This service supports me and others immensely. Volunteers, thank you for your time, effort and dedication."

"They are amazing, answering all my questions, checked and double-checked the procedure, and when I left, I knew everything was submitted, no worries. They were helpful and pleasant. I let them know my appreciation."

"The best part is that I have confidence in the preparers—they know what they're doing."

"Thank you very much! I appreciate you for helping people like me. As a single mom, it's wonderful when getting your taxes done can be free and done by kind individuals."



Volunteers at the K-State Extension tax site. The KC Metro Tax Coalition serves taxpayers in Missouri and Kansas.



Field specialist Julie Riddle with Ivanhoe director Alana Henry (left) and members of staff. Mazuma Credit Union granted the Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council with \$10,000 to support their programs, including free tax preparation.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS: 2024 OVERVIEW

The Urban West Region of MU Extension provided impactful community development programs in 2024, organized into four key areas: belonging, contribution, leadership, and vitality. Below is a summary of major programs and partnerships achievements.

I. Veteran R.E.A.D.S. Program (VRP): Empowering Veterans Through Story

Joshua Shinn led the VRP to assist veterans and their families in connecting through storytelling. The program featured 15 sessions at Truman Habitat for Humanity and seven sessions at the Dorothy Day Cabin in Parkville, reaching 87 veterans. Funded by the Great Books Foundation, veterans examined themes from *Standing Down: From Warrior to Civilian*, reflecting on the transitions from military to civilian life. The VRP also gained visibility through presentations at conferences and a Veterans' Day celebration. In 2025, the VRP plans to expand into Clay and Jackson counties and publish participants' stories in *Veteran's Voices* magazine.

II. Partnership with Life Unlimited

- › Urban West Extension formed a strategic partnership with Life Unlimited to serve adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Key activities include Adopting a Willow Creek home to provide quarterly maintenance.
- › Organizing service days with 21 faculty and staff assisting with storage cleanup and holiday decorations.
- › Hosting a holiday party for 200 residents, with Joshua Shinn playing Santa. This partnership highlights UWE's dedication to enhancing the quality of life for underserved populations.
- › III. Collaboration with the Historic East Neighborhood Coalition (HENC)

MU Extension partnered with HENC to empower historically African-American and Hispanic neighborhoods in Kansas City's east side. Highlights include:

- › Securing a \$20,000 Neighborhood Empowerment Grant.
- › Conducting asset mapping for Blue Valley and other neighborhoods to identify resources and needs.
- › Partnering with KCPD for crime and safety assessments, including the ongoing Van Brunt Blvd/Hardesty Ave. Corridor Project.
- › Acting as fiscal agent for HENC and expanding this service to other neighborhood associations.



The Urban West Region's Adopt-a-Home at Willow Creek



IV. MO Health & Wellness: Community Health Back-to-School Event

In August, MU Extension collaborated with Truman Habitat for Humanity, UMKC, and other partners to host this event in Independence, MO, serving over 300 attendees. The event provided: Free health services (e.g., vaccinations, screenings).

- › Resources for college readiness, workforce development, and STEAM education.
- › Plans are underway to make this an annual event.

V. Urban West Professional Development and Tools

- › The Urban West team emphasized professional growth and resource creation:
- › Participated in mentorship and community engagement programs, including "Mentoring at Mizzou." initiative. Developed Google-based calendars to centralize programming information for stakeholders.
- › Conducted surveys to align programming with regional needs and improved governance materials.

VI. Neighborhood Leadership Academy (NLA)

- › This statewide program empowers participants to tackle local issues and promote community improvement. In 2024, NLA engaged regional cohorts in 10 weekly sessions that blended online and in-person learning.
- › Participants designed and presented community projects, achieving a success rate of 70% implemented.
- › 68.2% of participants assumed new leadership roles.
- › The program continues to inspire residents to create lasting change.

Through its diverse programs and strategic partnerships, MU Extension's Urban West Region has improved the well-being, leadership, and vitality of Missouri communities. It shows a commitment to fostering sustainable and thriving communities neighborhoods.



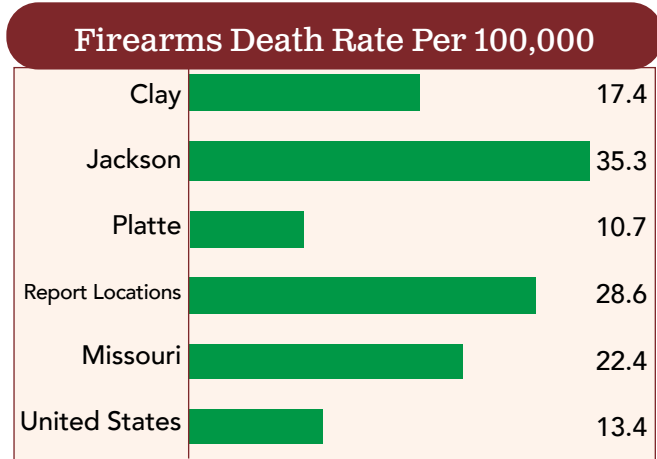
Veteran R.E.A.D.S. at Truman Habitat for Humanity in Independence, MO
Free cookies and anthologies at Veteran R.E.A.D.S.

COMMUNITY HEALTH ENGAGEMENT & OUTREACH

The Community Health Engagement & Outreach (CHEO) division of MU Extension prioritizes optimal health and well-being for every Missourian at all stages of life. To achieve this goal, our regional Community Health Specialist (CHS) seeks to form partnerships with local entities that address the unique needs of their communities. In 2024, the Urban West CHS conducted a Community Health Needs Assessment aimed at reducing health disparities and inequities while improving population health outcomes in the Urban West Region. The needs assessment used secondary data sources to identify health priorities, including firearm violence, obesity, and breast cancer. Additionally, an anonymous Qualtrics "Voices" survey gathered community members' health experiences and concerns in the Urban West Region. A brief snapshot of the Community Health Needs Assessment is included in this Annual Report.

FIREARMS VIOLENCE-EMERGING PRIORITY

The Urban West region sees alarming rates of firearm deaths per 100,000 individuals. The rate of firearm-related deaths from homicides, suicides, and unintentional injuries is significantly higher in Jackson County compared to the rest of Missouri and the United States. Similarly, Clay County reports a higher rate of firearm deaths than the national average.



OBESITY-CHRONIC DISEASE PRIORITY

Obesity is a chronic, complex disease characterized by excessive fat accumulation that can harm health. For adults, obesity is determined by a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 30 or higher. This condition can raise the risk of type 2 diabetes and heart disease, impact bone health and reproduction, and increase the likelihood of certain cancers. Clay and Jackson County have higher obesity rates than both the state and the national average, while Platte County also exhibits higher obesity rates than the state.



BREAST CANCER PRIORITY

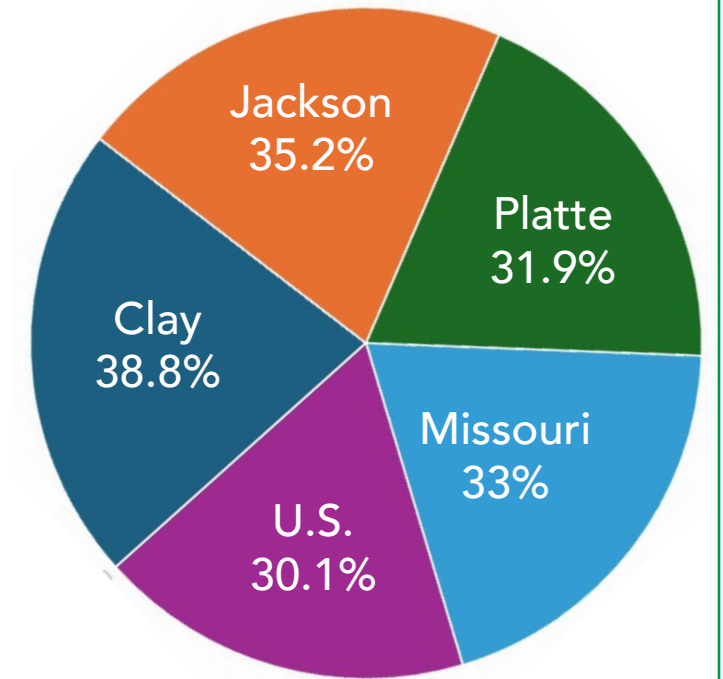
Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in the U.S. and in Missouri. Our rates are higher across all three counties in the Urban West compared to both Missouri and the U.S. Among the risk factors are obesity, a sedentary lifestyle, smoking, and alcohol consumption.

VOICES SURVEY FINDINGS

Sixty-eight community members in the Urban West region offered insights into their families' and communities' health and wellness concerns. Community respondents highlighted mental health and substance use as the most pressing health issues facing their communities.

In addition, respondents shared their biggest concern for the health and well-being of their families. Many of the replies were about "the cost of living. Everything is so expensive." Respondents are "living paycheck to paycheck and trying to make food stretch." Healthcare costs, the availability of doctors in the area where people live, and gun and crime safety are also concerns for families. Findings from the Community Health Needs Assessment and the Voices Survey have led to partnerships with organizations like Swope Health to submit a grant to the EPA to address public health outcomes and environmental resilience and with C&C Produce and the UMKC Roo Pantry to address student food insecurity. Stay tuned in 2025!

Percent of Obese Adults with BMI > 30.0



Voices Survey:

The most pressing health concerns for our counties are as follows:

- 35 RESPONSES Mental health issues (e.g., social isolation, difficulty accessing support services, social media addiction, anxiety/depression, suicide).
- 17 RESPONSES Substance use (including alcohol, marijuana, opioids, tobacco, vaping, etc.).
- 15 RESPONSES Lack of affordable health care
- 12 RESPONSES Family relationships (e.g., parent-child interactions, parenting skills, divorce, emotional abuse, or neglect, etc.).
- 11 RESPONSES Lack of access to health care (e.g., transportation issues, distance to services, shortage of specialists in your area, etc.).
- 11 RESPONSES Unhealthy eating habits, overweight, obesity, or type 2 diabetes.

URBAN WEST- NUTRITION AND HEALTH

Our Area Of Expertise

MU Extension serves as the link between the University of Missouri’s proven research, knowledge, and resources and Missouri’s 6.2 million citizens. Working with state and local partners, we deliver real-world solutions to address Missouri’s grand challenges in agriculture, economic opportunity, educational access, and health and well-being. Our faculty and staff empower individuals, strengthen communities, and develop leaders. True to our land-grant mission, we serve Missouri by delivering Mizzou’s expertise to improve lives and create opportunities.

2024
 Direct Contacts: **7,742**
 Indirect Contacts: **18,753**
 Sessions: **228**
 Events: **65**

OUR PARTNERS IN 2024

- | | |
|---|--|
| A Turning Point, Archwell-Independence, Avila University, Bethel Greencastle Apartments, Blue Springs Colonial Gardens, Cardinal Ridge Apartments, Cathedral Square Towers, Chouteau Village, Children’s Mercy, Clay County Senior Services, Columbus Park Apartments, DA Holmes II Apartments, Dearborn Senior Collaborative, Destiny Towers, Excelsior Springs Community Center, Excelsior Springs Farmer’s Market, Fairmount Plaza, Gabriel Towers, Heritage House, Ivanhoe Community Center, Kansas City Gardener, Kansas City Health Care - Veterans Affairs, Kansas City Parks and Recreation, Kansas City Veterans Affairs, Kansas City Healthy Lifestyles Collaborative, Kearney Senior Center, Mid-America Regional Council, Mid-Continent Public Library, MLK Village, Missouri | Department of Agriculture, Northland CAPS, North Kansas City Parks and Recreation, Northland Coalition, Northland Health Alliance, Northland Sheperd’s Center, One Bite Nutrition, Oak Grove Manor, Our Health Matters Magazine, Parkville Living Center, Pheonix Family, Platte County Parents as Teachers, Platte County Senior Services, Prairie Estates, Regency Manor, Robert J Mohart Center, Saint Lukes, Sherwood Bible Church, Senior Falls Coalition, Sterling Plaza, Swope Parkway Estates, Swope Ridge Gardens, The Kansas City Public Library, The Palmer Center, Tremont Place Senior Apartments, Truman Habitat for Humanity, University of Missouri-Kansas City, Vine Street Manor, Willow Estates, Woodlands at Citadel, Northwest Missouri State University. |
|---|--|

Fall Prevention

As a result of our fall prevention programs MU Extension contributed an estimated \$89,813 in annual healthcare cost savings to the Kansas City area in 2024.

- Stay Strong, Stay Healthy** – Supporting this program helps participants improve their ability to perform daily activities, enhance physical fitness, and boost strength, balance, and flexibility. Regular physical activity lowers the risk of falls, promotes better overall health, and fosters greater independence. These health benefits reduce the likelihood of participants losing their independence and needing to move into a care facility, which costs an average of \$58,000 per year in Missouri.



PARTICIPANT QUOTES:

“This program improved my life by increasing my mobility, strength, and mood.”

“I feel more confident getting out and about.”

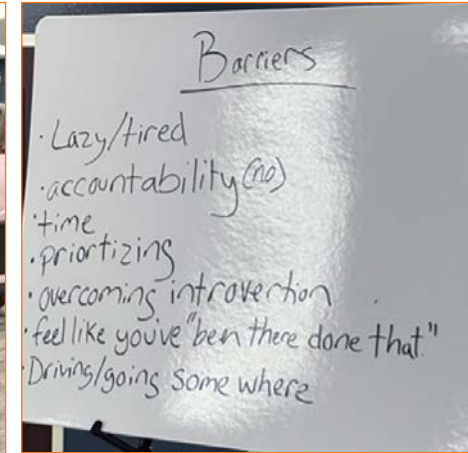
“I’ve been doing SSSH since January 2020. I lost my husband in 2020 and this program has been enjoyable.

I remember the joy I felt the first time I touched my toes in the stretching exercises. I can now lift, at the age of 80 a 50-pound suitcase into the trunk of my car thanks to you!”

- Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention** – Supporting this program helps participants improve both their physical and mental health, enhance balance, flexibility, pain management, stiffness, muscular strength, confidence, mood, and energy. This nationally recognized program supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), helps participants reduce their risk of falls and fall-related injuries and remain independent longer.
- A Matter of Balance** – When you support this program, you help participants reduce their fear of falling and increase their engagement in social and physical activities. A Matter of Balance is a nationally recognized program supported by the National Council on Aging. Preventing a fall is less expensive than treating one, and can help reduce unplanned medical costs, contributing to healthcare savings. Improved health enables adults to confidently remain active.

PARTICIPANTS OUTCOMES:
 92% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed the program reduced their fear of falling
 100% of participants agreed/strongly agreed to continue exercising

PARTICIPANTS OUTCOMES:
 86% strongly agree to continue exercising.
 60% increased assurance in the ability to reduce falls after the four-week course.



FOOD SAFETY AND NUTRITION EDUCATION

- › **Cooking Matters** - helps participants learn smart shopping strategies and healthy cooking skills to prepare nutritious, low-cost meals and snacks at home. Encouraging healthy behaviors helps: reduce health care costs, prevent chronic health conditions, reduce food waste and costs.
- › **Home Food Preservation** – helps participants learn safe, research-based techniques to enhance access to an adequate supply of safe, affordable food, and reducing waste and food-borne illness.

PARTICIPANTS OUTCOMES:

100% reported being somewhat/very confident they can prepare healthy foods

78% reported being very confident they can feed themselves or their family with money available after the sixth session

PARTICIPANTS OUTCOMES:

100% of participants report gaining knowledge/developed new skills

80% of participants reported confidence in knowing where to go for recipes for preserving food

Community Engagement And Education

- › **Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program**
A seasonal program, in partnership with the Missouri Department of Agriculture, provides low-income seniors with vouchers to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables from participating local growers.
575 participants received \$50 in vouchers, for a total of \$28,750 distributed in Clay, Jackson, and Platte counties.
69% redemption rate, which is up from previous years and will continue to rise due to partnerships with local farmers to bring produce boxes straight to our community members.
1,257 total participants across the state of Missouri, equaling \$62,850 benefits for seniors.
- › **Missouri Crunch Off** - A statewide seasonal program to celebrate Farm to School Month and the produce Missouri has to offer by distributing Missouri grown food between Oct. 1-31.
1,240 local apples and bags of popcorn were given out to Kansas City residents.
534 crunch events took place totaling 213,164 crunches. \$109,813 given in the form of locally produced items: popcorn, apples, and cucumbers. The money helps Missourians have access to fresh produce but also pours revenue into our state to make a local impact.



SNAP-ED PUBLIC VALUE STATEMENT 2024

The **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education** (SNAP-Education or SNAP-Ed) brought \$11,145,237 in federal funds to Missouri. The funds support engagement with 74,864 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 1,164,143 indirect educational contacts through newsletters, health fairs, food pantries, and the Show Me Nutrition helpline.

29,310 direct and indirect contacts were made in Clay, Jackson and Platte County.

FY 24 SNAP PARTICIPATION

County	Total
Clay	1,313
Jackson	24,807
Platte	3,190

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.

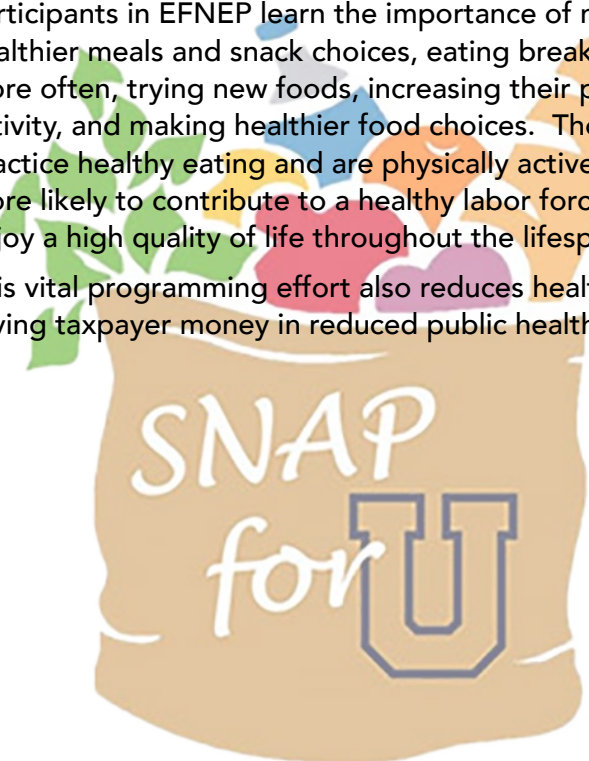
EFNEP Public Value Statement 2024

The **Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program** (EFNEP) brought \$1,624,777 federal funds to Missouri. These funds were used to enroll 559 limited-resource families in nutrition education and meal preparation classes, representing 2,068 family members. Additionally, 2,864 youth were enrolled in EFNEP classes.

- › 1,177 of these youth and adult participants reside in Clay, Jackson and Platte 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.

EFNEP ADULT PARTICIPATION:

County	Total
Clay	13
Jackson	1,144
Platte	20



UMKC AND MU EXTENSION: PARTNERS

Driving Positive Change in Clay, Jackson, and Platte Counties – and Beyond

The University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) and MU Extension are united in their mission to uplift the communities they serve across Clay, Jackson, and Platte Counties, as well as the entire state of Missouri, through meaningful collaboration and impactful engagement. Over the past year, this partnership has taken many forms, as the two organizations frequently worked side by side on community-centered initiatives.

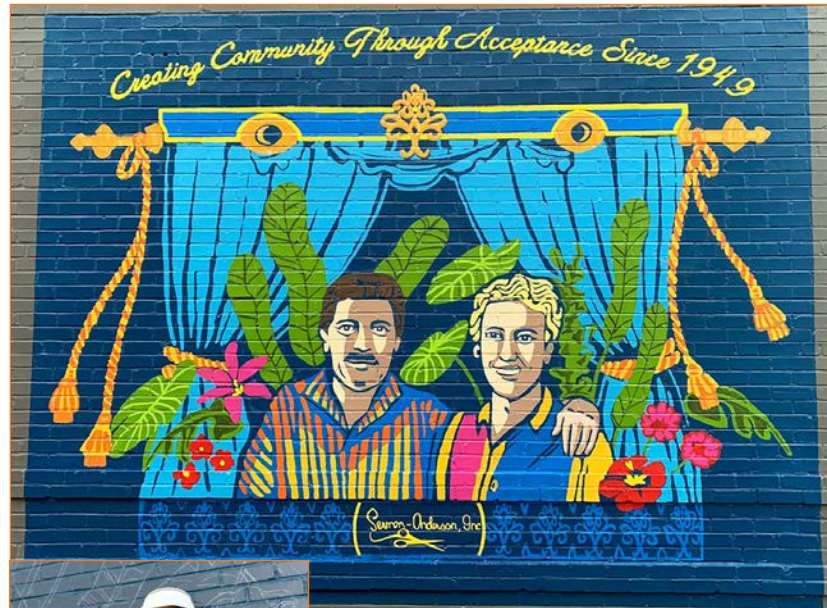
MU Extension staff members are embedded within UMKC's Division of External Relations and Constituent Engagement, creating a shared workspace that not only reduces costs for taxpayers but also fosters seamless collaboration. Together, UMKC and MU Extension maximize shared resources to address pressing local and statewide challenges. Here are a few highlights of their impactful work this past year:

PROVIDING TAX ASSISTANCE AND HANDS-ON LEARNING

MU Extension oversees Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program sites across the Kansas City metro area, including one at UMKC. This program offers UMKC students valuable hands-on experience and college credit while delivering substantial community benefits. In 2023, the VITA program helped generate hundreds of thousands of dollars in tax refunds for low-income residents.

FOSTERING COMMUNITY THROUGH ART

The UMKC School of Humanities and Social Sciences partnered with MU Extension, the Englewood Arts Center, and the WiNc Inclusion Center to create a mural in Independence's Englewood neighborhood. Designed by UMKC media, art, and design student Amy Do, the mural reflects a message of community building through acceptance.



The community came together to help paint a mural highlighting Sermon Anderson at Independence Englewood Arts Center. Designed by UMKC media and student Amy Do.

ADVANCING NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Faculty from UMKC's Center for Neighborhoods contributed to MU Extension's National Extension Leadership Development program, offering essential insights on community development. During their time in Kansas City, program participants joined UMKC External Relations staff to tour UMKC's community projects, including three controlled-growth-environment farmhouses at the Veterans Community Project. This initiative equips U.S. military veterans with the skills to grow crops like basil and mushrooms and was developed by Angela Cottrell, director of research and institute programs for the UMKC Missouri Institute for Defense and Energy, and Juan Cabrera-Garcia, MU Extension state horticulture specialist.

REVITALIZING HISTORIC KESSLER PARK

MU Extension has joined forces with Kansas City Parks and Recreation, UMKC, and Confluence Design Firm to revitalize North Terrace Lake in Historic Kessler Park, a project supported by a grant from the Missouri Department of Conservation. Community members have actively participated, sharing ideas for improvements such as safe parking and lighting, trail preservation, picnic areas, and public art installations. A unique highlight is an interactive scavenger hunt curated by UMKC graphic design students under the guidance of Assistant Professor of Graphic Design Zachary Frazier.

IHD/ALIANZAS PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

QUALITATIVE & QUANTITATIVE DATA HIGHLIGHTS

ALIANZAS continued its mission of fostering engagement and outreach, focusing on Latino cultural understanding and community building. Highlights include:

LATINO CULTURAL VALUES PRESENTATIONS

Delivered presentations on cultural differences to various organizations, including Habitat for Humanity-Kansas City (19 leadership participants), the Cambio de Colores Annual Conference (40+ attendees), and the Osher Lifelong Institute-Columbia (20 retired educators).

COMMITMENT TO EXTENSION & ENGAGEMENT AWARDS

Participated in the review of 42 award applications for two major committees (EEW Awards and C. Brice Ratchford Award), contributing to a 50% increase in applicant participation. Awards were presented during Engagement and Extension Week.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

- Participated in MU S&T's Celebration of Nations, hosting a booth that educated over 280 attendees about MU Extension and IHD programs.
- Supported MIZZOU's Afro-Cuban Legacies Arts Festival, with over 350 attendees exploring Afro-Cuban art, music, and culture.
- Collaborated on Conexión Hispana and Family Fiesta, reaching over 330 Latino community members with resources and information.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

Attended the Cultural Intelligence (CQ) Center's global conference, integrating insights into programming to enhance cross-cultural understanding.



CAMBIO DE COLORES ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Contributed to the planning of this multistate conference for the 9th consecutive year, promoting immigrant integration. The 2024 event featured Kansas City Mayor Quinton Lucas and drew 185 attendees.

HISPANIC WORKFORCE COALITION IN BRANSON, MO

Organized a 5 de Mayo Community Fair with the Branson Chamber of Commerce, attracting 200+ participants and featuring cultural performances, food, and workforce resources.



Dr. David Livermore (center), Author & Co-Founder of Cultural Intelligence Center

ONGOING PROGRAMS & OUTREACH

QUARTERLY BILINGUAL NEWSLETTER

Distributed Winter 2023, Spring 2024, and Summer 2024 issues to over 600 MU faculty and specialists, featuring intercultural topics and community success stories.

LATINO OUTREACH FOR IDD COMMUNITY

Collaborated with the Access and Functional Needs Committee to disseminate resources in Spanish, reaching 25 professionals bi-monthly. Promoted new IDD programs to Latino communities statewide.



INTERPRETER CERTIFICATION

Achieved certification as a Qualified Community Interpreter, enhancing support for MU Extension Specialists in Hispanic outreach.

LOOKING AHEAD

ALIANZAS remains committed to empowering Latino communities and fostering cultural connections through education, collaboration, and outreach.

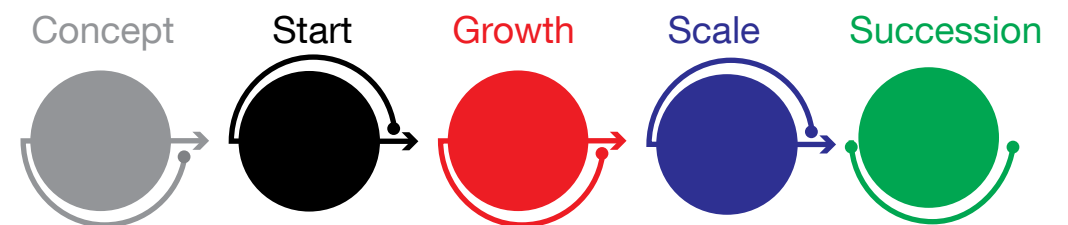
MISSOURI SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Working with more than 1200 unique clients in 2024, the Missouri Small Business Development Center and APEX Accelerators team tracked 3,643 counseling hours, attributing to business sales growth of \$156 million through project awards and increased sales revenue. These small businesses created 309 new jobs and grew with capitalization in excess of \$40 million.

The MO SBDC at UMKC covers 11 counties in Missouri: Jackson, Clay, Platte, Carroll, Livingston, Grundy, Mercer, Harrison, Daviess, Ray, and Caldwell. Their team of eight professional consultants provide no-cost 1-2-1 consulting, low-cost virtual and in-person trainings, and connections to area resources and professional partners for entrepreneurs and small business owners in the ideation, early stage, growth, scale, and exit of business ownership. They work with main street businesses in any industry: manufacturing, service, retail, and have specialists working with technology founders in perfecting their concept, pitching to investors, and sourcing funding.



We are Entrepreneurs Serving Entrepreneurs!



SBDC.UMKC.EDU
816-235-6063



Justin Strickland – 4-H Field Specialist

Justin is a Kansas City native with an educator mother, learning early of the power and importance of youth development. Justin earned a Sport Management degree from Culver-Stockton College then back to Kansas City serving youth. He then attended Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (Masters of Theology in Leadership) and used that to develop youth across the metro area. Justin has expertise in college readiness, leadership development, and program development. He is excited to be a part of Platte County 4-H.

Dylan Newman – 4-H Youth Educator

Dylan Newman is Youth Development Educator for 4-H Community Clubs in the Urban West Region. Prior to joining MU Extension, Dylan worked in MO public schools as an early childhood and elementary teacher, and in the MO public library system as a youth services associate. With years of experience in the realm of education, Dylan has a strong passion for positive youth development.



Shianna Burgett – Youth Development, Field Specialist, Clay County

Experience/Professional Growths: Shianna has over 10 years of experience working with students and families of at-risk populations in the non-profit sector, with 6 years in K-12 schools. Shianna holds a Master of Arts in Teaching, Secondary Education and places high priority on continued education and professional development. Shianna believes in the importance of educational opportunity and access to experiential learning for underrepresented youth.

Tamra Reall, Ph.D. – Field Specialist Horticulture, Jackson

With degrees in horticulture, entomology, and teaching, she passionately engages the public in science outreach. She works closely with Cathy Bylinowski to lead the Extension Master Gardeners in Greater Kansas City and to manage volunteer gardens in Kansas City. Tamra co-advises the Osage Trails Master Naturalist Chapter, writes the “Kids ask Dr. Bug” column, and shares horticulture and entomology information.



Todd Higgins – Field Specialist Horticulture, Clay, and Platte

Dr. Todd Higgins joined MU Extension in 2023. He serves six counties, including Clay and Platte in the Urban West region. Higgins earned degrees in Plant and Soil Science from the University of Massachusetts (BS) and Southern Illinois University (MS) and a Ph.D. in Agronomy from the University of Arkansas. He served as an Engineer in the Army for 24 years. After retiring he served as Assoc. Prof. of Research at Lincoln University for 8 years.

Matt Pezold – Labor and Workforce Development Specialist, Jackson County

Matt promotes the adoption of inclusive and participatory leadership, best practices in mentorship, career pathway exploration, and healthy workplace initiatives. Matt works directly with local students (college/high school), and with employers/labor unions addressing challenges. Programs: Labor Studies Certificate (Labor and Community Leadership, Globalization and Workers), Labor Law Lunch Series, Career Pathway Exploration, Labor History, Solidarity Series, regional workforce and economic outlook, and healthy workplace programming.



Elena Stephenson – Field Specialist in Community Development

Elena is Kansas City based and versed in performing, directing, and educating. While raising a fiery redhead, she is an arts education advocate and cultural community activist. Her BFA is in Acting/Directing from ACU, as well as a MA in Applied Theatre for Colleges and Communities, NYU Steinhardt. She is a teaching artist and curriculum consultant. Her essay “The Fundamentals of the Pedagogy of a Teaching Artist” was published in The Teaching Artist Journal. Previously, she worked as Theatre and Performing Arts Coordinator for The Johnson County Arts and Heritage Center in Johnson County, Kansas.

Joshua Shinn – Extension and Engagement Specialist Community Development, Urban West

Josh holds a BA in Liberal Studies (2006) and an MA in English Composition (2011) from California State University, San Bernardino. He uses his 20+ years of experience in education, administration, and community development to grow programs for youth, veterans, communities of color, and the larger KC Metro.



Julie Riddle – Financial Specialist

Julie Riddle, MSW, has worked with free tax preparation in the Kansas City area for the past 20 years. Prior to joining MU Extension, she oversaw financial capability programming at United Way of Greater Kansas City. Ms. Riddle helped to form the KC Metro Tax Coalition and continues to serve in a leadership role.

Wayne Flanary – Field Specialist in Agronomy

Wayne has spent 41 years in working as an agronomist for University of Missouri Extension and with Industry. He is a Certified Professional Agronomist and Certified Crop Adviser with the Agronomy Society of America.



Amie Schleicher – Livestock Field Specialist Clay & Platte

Her educational background includes a BS in animal science from the University of Nebraska and a MS in ruminant nutrition from the University of Wyoming. Amie works with livestock producers in all aspects of livestock production, but especially enjoys working in the areas of livestock nutrition, forages, and youth livestock projects.

Tracy Graybill – Community Health Specialist

Tracy completed her Ph.D. in Higher Education and Student Affairs in 2019 from the University of Missouri, Kansas City. Tracy is dedicated to promoting the health of communities in the Urban West Region by actively engaging community leaders and stakeholders to address health disparities through targeted interventions and collaborative partnerships.



Melissa Cotton – Field Specialist Nutrition & Health

Melissa Cotton is a Field Specialist in Nutrition and Health Education, serving Jackson and Clay Counties. She has worked for the University of Missouri Extension for seven years, providing educational opportunities focusing on nutrition, health, wellness, food safety, physical activity, and chronic disease prevention and self-management. Her educational programs contribute to MU Extension’s long-term goal of improving the national health ranking of Missouri from 40th to 25th.

Elizabeth McGinley – Field Specialist Nutrition & Health

Elizabeth serves the Kansas City area. Prior to joining MU Extension, she had 10 years with the University of Arkansas System Coop Extension as Family and Consumer Science Cty Ext. Agent. With a Master’s, and Bachelor’s in Human Environmental Sciences, and a major in Human Development and Family Studies (minor in Communications), from the U of Arkansas. A certified Regional Community Trainer for C.O.M.E.T (Changing Our Mental & Emotional Trajectory), she offers programs related to wellness, healthy eating, food safety, physical activity, and chronic disease prevention/management.



Sidney Patrick – Field Specialist Nutrition & Health

Sidney Patrick is a Field Specialist in Nutrition and Health Education with the University of Missouri Extension. She offers programming related to active aging, healthy eating, and physical activity in the Kansas City area. With state and local partners, she delivers real-world solutions to address our state’s grand challenges of educational access, health, and well-being.

Susan Smith – Extension Instructor Health and Science

Her educational background includes a BS in animal science from the University of Nebraska and a MS in ruminant nutrition from the University of Wyoming. Amie works with livestock producers in all aspects of livestock production, but especially enjoys working in the areas of livestock nutrition, forages, and youth livestock projects.





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