

Joe K. Lear

Joe is a Native of Missouri growing up on a small, diversified farm near Sweet Springs in Saline County. After high School, Joe attended the University of Missouri receiving his bachelor's and Master's degree in Agricultural Mechanization (now known as Agricultural Systems Man

Joe moved to Trenton Missouri in 1896 to serve as an Ag Engineering Specialist with University of Missouri Extension. Joe helped developed and deliver a program on educating producers about equipment adjustment to work in reduced tillage and no-till environments using actual row units from the various manufacturers as well as aftermarket parts. Millions of tons of Missouri soil were saved by reaching over 10,000 producers with the program across the state. Joe also worked with the Extension Water Quality Team in the region providing education on protecting the waters of NW Missouri. Joe has lived in Trenton, Gallatin, and St. Joseph before moving to Columbia MO in 1999.

Joe has worked in Information Technology first as a regional Information Technology Specialist in St. Joseph, then as a Systems Network Engineer and Associate Director with Extension Technology Computer Services with University of Missouri Extension on Campus. Joe helped move county extension offices to commercial high-speed internet from slower dedicated Internet Connections.

In 2012, Joe became the director for the IT team for Kansas State Research and Extension living in Manhattan, KS. Joe helped merge the Extension IT team with the K-State Campus IT team to enhance support for the county offices as well as the campus eventually becoming director of the Enterprise Server Technology team and Interim Chief Information Security Officer for Kansas State University until 2017.

In 2017, Joe returned to Missouri to serve as regional director for 20 counties in northwest Missouri with University of Missouri Extension. Joe supervised the extension faculty and staff and worked with the local extension councils on local needs and concerns. Joe currently serves on the Broadband Initiative Team for the UM System. The team helps facilitate working with communities, and local partners with the 4 campuses of the University of Missouri. Joe also has served on the Maximize NWMO navigation team before becoming the coordinator for the Maximize NWMO program. The team works with communities to develop leadership and systems thinking using the national Communities of Excellence 2026 framework developed by the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program.