University of Georgia Cooperative Extension is working hard for its constituents. The following are examples of Extension’s impact in the county over the past year.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

In 2017, nearly 900 participants experienced science, technology, engineering, arts and math (STEAM) through Newton County 4-H STEAM programming, which included hands-on activities and events in the community. Newton County 4-H connected members with STEAM trainings and opportunities outside of the county and partnered with schools and community groups to deliver 4-H STEAM activities.

Local 4-H’ers practiced skills in a five-day STEAM Trek day camp led by older youth. An eighth-grade 4-H’er earned a Disney grant to fund a 3-D printer and taught 4-H and school groups to make prosthetic devices for children in a Hand-a-Thon. Members can now attend monthly 4-H MakerSpace events to practice robotics, 3-D printing, arts and more.

Throughout the year, teens and adults led sessions at Washington Street Community Center and Rocky Plains Elementary, Porterdale Elementary, Middle Ridge Elementary and Newton County Theme schools, as well as a local Golf and Science Camp, with activities in zoonosis and hand-washing, 3-D printing, water quality and testing, hydraulics, electronics, and robotics.

One 4-H’er connected her love of wildlife to her talent in the arts by creating a coloring book for Bear Hollow Zoo, raising funds through her Leadership in Action project. During her book release party at a local art store, children learned about animals by meeting a snake, created unique art, watched an animal puppet show on how to make friends, and performed in their own puppet show. Eighty percent of participants responding to the survey reported learning information about wildlife, 20 percent said they learned about interpersonal skills, and 20 percent learned about art. As a result of the 4-H event, one child wrote, “I learned that you can be anyone’s friend.”

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Green industry professionals are confronted with making accurate, appropriate pesticide applications daily. Knowing which pesticide to use requires properly identifying the pest, whether it’s a weed, disease or insect. To help demonstrate how easily someone can select a pesticide not suitable for a targeted pest, the Newton County Extension office conducted anonymous electronic surveys of pest identification. Using the electronic surveying system, the classes revealed that green industry professionals identified weeds, diseases and insects in turfgrass correctly 57 percent of the time. After the classes were complete, the same participants identified the same turfgrass weeds, diseases and insects correctly 88 percent of the time. This resulted in a 31 percent increase in correct identification, which leads to more appropriate pesticide selection and application.

Improved pest identification is the first step in controlling targeted pests. Correct pest identification will help applicators’ performance and will improve customer satisfaction and environmental protection. During 2017, 50 green industry professionals and approximately 100 farmers were trained in proper pest identification.
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Goods and services related to Georgia’s agriculture and natural resources affect each of the state’s communities every day. Agriculture is Georgia’s largest industry, and its direct and indirect economic impact totals $73.3 billion. More than 383,600 Georgia jobs are directly involved in commodity or food- and fiber-related industries.

UGA Extension faculty and staff play a key role in the success of this industry by sharing university-based research for Georgians to use on the farm and at home. Recommendations in areas including soil fertility, pest management, plant and crop varieties, water quality, and herd health and management focus on maximizing production and profits while minimizing environmental impacts.

Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension agents also provide homeowners and communities with information on lawn care, landscaping, gardening and water conservation through a variety of workshops. Some agents also work with schools on projects like community gardens and farm-to-school programs.

Georgia Master Gardener Extension Volunteers give thousands of hours of service to their communities by answering questions in county offices and creating educational opportunities.

4-H Youth Development

As the youth development program of UGA Extension, 4-H is also part of a national network. Georgia 4-H reaches more than 170,000 fourth- through 12th-grade students across the state and helps students develop the knowledge, life skills and attitudes that will enable them to become self-directing, productive and contributing members of society. This mission is fulfilled through hands-on learning experiences in agricultural and environmental awareness, leadership, communication skills, citizenship, energy conservation, health, and food and nutrition.

Georgia 4-Hers are well-known for sharing their knowledge and volunteering throughout their communities. At the school and county levels, students participate in local meetings organized by 4-H Youth Development Extension agents. At the state level, students participate in competitions, summer camps and conferences. Some 4-H competitions and events are also offered at the regional and national levels.

Research indicates that, as a result of participating in 4-H, members are more engaged in their academic studies, less likely to become involved in risky behavior, and more likely to graduate from high school and continue their education.

Family & Consumer Sciences

Family and Consumer Sciences Extension specialists, agents and staff assist in addressing real-life issues faced by Georgians of all ages. They provide programs and the latest information on obesity, chronic disease, food and financial insecurity, family stress, unhealthy housing, food safety and preservation, nutrition and more.

To help promote the positive development and safety of preschool, school-aged and adolescent youth, UGA Extension offers resources for parents, caregivers and others. Extension professionals in this program area lead consumer economics trainings and programs such as ServSafe®, Relationship Smarts, and PRIDE, a parent and teen driving education course.

Extension also promotes healthy lifestyles through statewide programs. Walk Georgia is a virtual, fitness-tracking resource that encourages physical fitness and healthy lifestyles to better the lives of Georgians. Other health programs managed by UGA include the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed). These classes teach families how to stretch their food dollars, eat healthier meals and snacks, and reduce the risk of foodborne illnesses.

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