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

**AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

Walton County has a wide array of agriculture. The combined agriculture within the county has a farm gate value estimated to be more than $34 million dollars. The industry has a huge impact on the county. The UGA Cooperative Extension office in Walton County has collaborated with other organizations in the community to deliver quality educational programs to citizens of the county. Programs ranged from food safety courses for farmer’s market vendors, to Master Gardener classes and pesticide recertification classes. Extension also plays a key role in assisting other organizations with meetings and programming, including Walton County Cattlemen’s Association, Monroe Farmers Market Committee, Master Gardeners, Walton County Bee Association and various local garden clubs. The Extension office also offered diagnostic services, such as water testing for homeowners, forage tests, soil tests and plant disease identification. Nearly 600 samples were processed through the Walton County Extension office for the year 2016. The Extension office serves as a hub of resources and information for producers and homeowners in Walton County.

**4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**

Walton County 4-H programs and events are offered for youth to learn and excel in leadership, citizenship, public speaking and critical-thinking skills. Fifty youth participated in 4-H Project Achievement, 1,038 competed in the county educational poster contest and more than 120 attended camp at one of the five 4-H centers throughout the state. Most Walton County 4-H clubs teach teamwork, character and good sportsmanship skills. In 2016, more than 200 Walton County youth participated in clubs and judging teams, such as hippology, home-school club, horse club, horse quiz bowl, poultry judging, Project S.A.F.E. (Shooting Awareness, Fun and Education) and wildlife judging. These teams and clubs traveled throughout the state and nation for numerous events and competitions.

**PROJECT F.R.E.E.**

Project F.R.E.E. (Fostering Relationship and Economic Enrichment) is a campus–community partnership that helps parents develop the skills needed to strengthen the quality of their couple and/or coparenting relationships. We also support parents in building their capacity to build and manage financial resources. The responsibilities of parenting add heavy demands to all couples. Negotiating these changes can often become a source of tension. Our Elevate program provides both married and unmarried couples with strategies and skills to manage stress and conflict while strengthening their relationship. For parents who are apart, parenting can be challenging. Our Together We Can program helps single parents develop strategies and skills to manage stress and conflict, promote a positive coparenting relationship and develop future healthy, romantic relationships. Both the Elevate and Together We Can programs are free. These no–cost, eight–hour programs include a meal and on–site childcare at each class, as well as $80 for attending all four classes. In addition to elevating relationships, parents participate in research that will support future programs. Each participant can earn up to $125.
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, with $74 billion of direct and indirect economic impact. More than 41,000 Georgia jobs are involved directly 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-H’ers are well known for sharing their knowledge and volunteering throughout their communities. At the school and county levels, students participate in club 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 be 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 stresses, 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 – a virtual, fitness-tracking resource – encourages improving physical fitness and healthy lifestyles in order 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.