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.

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Peanuts continue to be a leading crop in Baker County. Farmers depend on peanuts for the majority of their personal net farm income every year. Baker County Extension, as part of the University of Georgia, continues to provide unbiased, research-based production recommendations that have improved production, profitability, yield and quality of Baker County peanuts.

The passage of the 2018 U.S. Farm Bill has continued to encourage the planting of peanuts. The local Extension agent is seen as an educational resource with on-farm test plots, production meetings, timely newsletters and as-needed farm visits. This gets the latest research to the farms in a timely matter, allowing for the quick application of improved production techniques. Baker County farmers have been open to adopt new production technology such as GPS-guided tractors, new irrigation techniques, fungicide spray programs and harvesting based on UGA hull scrape techniques. In 2017, Baker County planted 17,500 acres of peanuts, with an average yield of 4,767 pounds per acre. The average peanut price was 21 cents per pound, resulting in more than $17 million in Baker County peanut sales. UGA Extension is seen as a vital part in the continued success and profitability in peanut production in Baker County and improving net farm income for all Georgia farm families.

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

Who doesn't love bingo? Clients at the Baker County Senior Center love to play this fun and popular game. Family and Consumer Sciences agent Sylvia Davis has put a twist on the game to help promote exercise and healthy eating by playing exercise bingo and nutrition bingo with senior center participants. Lack of physical exercise and poor nutrition can lead to health-related problems. Thirty percent of adults in Baker County are obese and 27 percent have reported that they are not getting the daily exercise they need. These bingo games are a fun way to teach adults how to eat healthy foods, how to avoid chronic disease and weight gain, how to stretch and exercise to help reduce the risk of obesity, and how to improve balance. These activities have been valuable to the seniors, and the director at the senior center has observed a visible change in seniors’ willingness to exercise and make healthier food choices at the center.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Many students fear getting up in front of people and speaking. Project Achievement helps reduce the fear and build public speaking skills. Nineteen 4-H'ers from Baker County participated in Project Achievement from fifth through 12th grade. Not only did they develop better public speaking skills for the competitions, but they learned time management, sportsmanship, self-confidence and, most of all, courage. Summer camp was also offered and four 4-H'ers spent a week at the 4-H Tidelands Nature Center on Jekyll Island. At camp, the 4-H'ers were able to work on their social skills through teamwork activities and friendly competitions with other 4-H'ers around the state. They also were able to learn about marsh and beach ecology and seine fishing, as well as going on nature hikes and swimming in the ocean, which many had never experienced.
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 $73.7 billion. More than 392,400 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-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 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.