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.

UGA Extension in Baldwin County and Baldwin County 4-H Club have taken the lead in planning the Northeast District County Officer Leadership Training Retreat.

In response to a need for training options for 4-H county council officers, the Baldwin County 4-H agent piloted a training program for county council officers for the local program. The training was designed to increase youth awareness of the foundational responsibilities of an officer (example: team work, program planning, parliamentary procedure, 4-H meeting management and leadership). The training was not specific to the officer role; instead, it was targeted at building foundational characteristics in youth leaders. In sharing the pilot with Northeast District Extension faculty and staff, the training was taken to a district level. A multicounty team of representatives coordinated an event for all participating counties to train all area youths together.

The 2018 training retreat was held September 15 to 16 at Wahsega 4-H Center in Dahlonega, Georgia. Six counties (Baldwin, Jones, Monroe, Oconee, Putnam and Richmond) participated in the first annual training. A total of 32 youths and adults attended the training.

The training retreat was focused on teaching foundational skills and meeting the general needs of 4-H officers, not role-specific training.

This was a continuation of the 2016 pilot by the Baldwin County 4-H agent. Baldwin County 4-H’ers responded positively to the qualitative event evaluation for the 2016 pilot, indicating that they enjoyed learning foundational skills as a team, rather than training for specific officer positions. In a repeat qualitative analysis at the end of the year, Baldwin 4-H officers again indicated that they would like to follow the new training model.

After the training, an analysis of youth responses showed a very high level of interest in the training being offered in subsequent years. Youth were asked to rank the effectiveness of each workshop in gaining awareness and understanding of the topic. The workshop on teamwork received the highest positive responses. Youth felt that the training would help them in 4-H in the coming year as they took new officer roles and that the training made them better 4-H officers and leaders.

Overall, the qualitative and quantitative feedback from participating youth about the training model was positive, and there was recorded interest in seeing it continue. Plans for a 2019 training are underway. The planning committee will use the data from the 2018 training to continue to craft and design the training using a holistic approach to provide 4-H leaders and officers with foundational skills and not for role-specific duties. Additional evaluations will be given to adults to assess their perceptions of the impact the training retreat had on the youth. A repeat evaluation will be performed in spring 2019 to longitudinally verify if the training has had a lasting impact on the behavior and performance of the 4-H’ers serving as officers and leaders in their local program.
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-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.