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

Barrow County 4-H continued to partner with the Barrow County Family Connection collaborative to offer the Relationship Smarts curriculum to middle- and high-school students in Barrow County. The groups organized a youth conference and trained 12 community partners to deliver the curriculum. In addition, a series of lessons were conducted with Winder Boys and Girls Club middle-school students. The Relationship Smarts curriculum promotes healthy relationships and gives youth the knowledge to make wise choices in their relationships. One hundred-twelve youth participated in the Relationship Smarts program offered through the youth conference and Boys and Girls Club. The majority of participants were between grades seven and 9 and between 12 and 14 years old. In surveys at the end of each program, a majority (60 percent) of respondents reported that they were very likely or likely to use the skills learned. Most (66.6 percent) participants felt the program was either helpful or very helpful to them. Additionally, 59.6 percent of respondents reported that they would refer this program to their friends. Likewise, 60 percent of respondents felt better about themselves after the program. Overall, the program appears to have had a positive influence on these youths.

The 4-H Project Achievement competition teaches students skills that they will use for a lifetime. The process encourages the development of oral and written communication skills. Barrow County 4-H held a school-level competition during which 522 fifth-grade students practiced their research and public speaking skills. In a survey, 100 percent of the students indicated that, because of school-level Project Achievement, they learned more about their topic and could identify at least three things to do to make a great presentation. Of the 522 students, 162 were invited to move on to the district-level competition, and 104 chose to compete on the district level. These Barrow County students performed very well at the district competition, with 71 percent earning first-, second- or third-place scores in their project areas. Barrow County 4-H received recognition for having the eighth–highest number of competitors in the state for Project Achievement.

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

UGA Extension in Barrow County offers an Agriculture and Natural Resources program committed to providing resources for gardeners, farmers, and school and community garden coordinators. The program’s initiatives for the past year included a Master Naturalist course and training for school-based garden coordinators.

Fort Yargo State Park and Barrow County Extension partnered to host a Master Naturalist course. Seven participants participated in 48 hours of hands-on classes ranging from water conservation and monitoring, to tree health and identification, to mammals of Georgia. All participants reported that they plan to take action on one or more natural resources issues, and 85.7 percent planned to volunteer based on information they learned in the course.

Barrow County Extension and the UGA Grow it. Know it. program received grant funding to conduct training for teachers and other school-based garden coordinators. Sixteen teachers participated in a five-day training to learn how to grow, cook and teach with vegetables. Survey comments included: “This is the best professional learning experience I’ve ever had!” and “Well worth my time. I especially enjoyed meeting other garden fanatics in my county.”
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 FRIDE, 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.