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

The 2018 cotton crop was in good shape when harvest season began, and it was looking to be a great year, but few south Georgia farmers were prepared for the devastation that would soon be caused by Hurricane Michael. As early warnings of a major storm approaching spread across the area, UGA Extension specialists and agents across the state devised a plan to measure crop losses.

Just days before the storm hit, agents went to fields in different stages of growth and cut all cotton out of a 10-foot row. The samples were bundled and the areas were marked. After the storm hit, agents went to the same area and cut out the next 10-foot row. Samples were sent to Tifton, Georgia, where the cotton was handpicked and weighed for yield loss.

More than 50 areas in 20 counties were sampled to gather accurate yield loss data. This was the first time samples were collected before and after a major storm. Cotton was the only crop for which data was collected.

Ben Hill County Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent Holly Anderson pulled four samples in Ben Hill County for the yield loss survey. Cotton losses were 600 to 1000 pounds of cotton lint per acre. The percent loss ranged from 37 percent to 61 percent in the four sample areas. Loss was variable depending on the age of the cotton and the area of the county where it was grown.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Georgia 4-H programming is all about teaching youth to make wise choices. Having the skills to make good decisions is especially valuable when youth are faced with difficult life situations. One of the best ways 4-H’ers learn the art of making informed, wise choices is through judging team experiences. Multiple research studies indicate that judging team experience is highly influential in the development of life skills such as decision-making, communication, public speaking, self-confidence and responsibility.

In 2018, Ben Hill County 4-H had 18 students on the consumer judging team and 20 students on the poultry judging team. Over the past decade, Ben Hill County 4-H has had 248 competitors in area consumer or poultry judging competitions.

4-H’ers made considerable progress in their mastery of soft skills by participating in judging teams, as evidenced by their success at 2018 judging events. The senior poultry judging team brought home the national championship title after placing first at area and state competitions. The junior poultry judging team placed second in the area competition. In consumer judging, both the senior and junior teams won in the area competition, and the senior team placed third at the state competition.

The competitive spirit of judging contests inspires these youth to give their best efforts in judging competitions and in other life endeavors, as well. The unique experience of judging team participation has also been shown to cultivate a desire for lifelong learning.

ugaextension.org/ben hill
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.

Learn more at: extension.uga.edu

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Cooperative Extension System of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s federal Smith-Lever Act. It’s a unique partnership between UGA, county governments and the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Cooperative Extension System of land-grant universities. Today, UGA Extension serves more than 2.1 million Georgians annually through a network of specialists, agents and staff who provide unbiased, research-based information driven by local needs and clientele input. From publications to in-person workshops and events, UGA Extension is ready to meet the needs of the state and its communities.