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

School, community and family engagement is a goal for Berrien County Schools. Helping parents build strong connections with school personnel enhances their ability to support their children academically and socially. Likewise, the Berrien County 4-H staff builds relationships by mentoring students through monthly in-school programs. According to the Tufts University Study of Positive Youth Development, 4-H’ers are four times more likely to give back to their communities and two times more likely to be civically active. Through friendly classroom competition, Berrien County 4-H was instrumental in engaging parents in school activities and encouraging 4-H participation among students through positive behaviors and rewards.

A “Club of the Month” contest was instituted to encourage 4-H participation and parental engagement. In addition to points earned for their club, members also earn “Bulldog Bucks,” which could be spent on items in the 4-H store. Each fifth-grade teacher has their own 4-H club, earning points by completing tasks including returning parent-signed newsletters, completing Friends books, participating in activities, and involvement in community events. Each month, points are tallied with the top club receiving a trophy and banner to display. The club with the most points all year earns “Club of the Year”.

The competition and Bulldog Bucks have been successful tactics for increasing 4-H participation. One teacher wrote, “By encouraging students to participate we are building life skills that are necessary for student success. In addition, there is a good chance that parents will become interested in 4-H programming as their children discuss the activities at home.” Over the past five years, youth completed more than 1,500 Friends books and more than 2,500 newsletters were signed by parents. More than 400 youth participated in 4-H activities during the year. Youth demonstrated the importance of community engagement by collecting 600 pounds of tabs for Ronald McDonald House Charities, donating 179 toys to Toys for Tots, and creating more than 600 Valentines for local nursing homes. Nearly 150 items were collected to benefit local causes like military families, disaster relief and animal shelters.

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Southern root-nematode is a serious pest in tobacco production. Nematodes secrete chemicals causing the host plant roots to form root galls. Infestations restrict root functions resulting in plant stunting and yield reduction.

The UGA Extension Tobacco Specialist, the acting Berrien County ANR agent and a local tobacco producer collaborated to establish a replicated trial to evaluate six nematicide treatments for efficacy against root-knot nematode: Untreated Check, Telone @ 6 gallons/A injected in bed, Nimitz @ 1.36 pt/A in 18” band (3.5 pt/A broadcast); Nimitz @ 1.95 pt/A in 18” band (5.0 pt/A broadcast), Nimitz @ 2.73 pt/A in 18” band (7.0 pt/A broadcast); and Velum Prime @ 6.8 oz/A via transplant water.

Trial was transplanted in randomized complete-block experimental design and replicated four times. Telone was applied April 1. Nimitz was applied April 7. Velum Prime was applied in transplant water April 12. Each treatment equaled 4 rows. Plants were randomly selected and dug. The roots were visually examined for galling on July 21.

Telone treatment showed the greatest vigor among all treatments. The same treatments also showed significantly less root-knot nematode incidence, severity and damage when compared to other treatments. Nimitz treatments, regardless of rate, showed the greatest incidence, severity and damage among all treatments, including untreated checks. Velum Prime treatments showed less incidence of root-knot nematode, however greater severity and damage than the untreated checks.

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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 $76 billion. More than 399,200 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 nearly 243,000 fourth- through 12th-grade students across the state. It helps them 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.