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

Farmers in Bleckley County grow a variety of crops, including cotton, peanuts, corn, soybeans, wheat, oats and rye. In today’s ever-changing field of agriculture, staying up to date on farming practices and technology requires access to timely, accurate and reliable information. To address this need, the newly hired UGA Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources agent started a blog/newsletter called Bleckley County Ag. Posts on the blog can be anything from a reminder for a meeting to an update on current agriculture policy such as the U.S. Farm Bill to recommendations for controlling a certain pest that is causing damage to crops. There are currently more than 50 farmers and agribusinesses who receive the blog through email, and there were 24 individual blog posts throughout the year.

UGA Extension in Bleckley County provides services to farmers, residents and homeowners in the local area. Along with taking calls and making site visits to homes, the Extension agent writes a monthly column in the Shopper’s Guide, a weekly sales paper distributed to households in different counties. These articles usually update the public about how our local farmers are doing as well as give tips to help homeowners with their lawns, gardens, etc.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Bleckley County 4-H meets with approximately 550 students, grades five through 12, during and after school instruction time. Students are engaged in agriscience, healthy living, STEM (science, technology, engineering and math), language arts, citizenship and leadership lessons, activities and programs throughout the year. Bleckley County 4-H also has a strong volunteer program with more than 20 volunteers leading clubs, including shooting sports clubs (shotgun, BB and archery), a horse club and a homeschool club. Certified volunteers also coach judging teams and chaperone weekend and weeklong events.

Throughout the year, Bleckley 4-H’ers have excelled at the Georgia National Fair, winning Superior Performance County, placing first in Consumer Judging and placing in the state Trap, Skeet and Sporting Clays State Tournament and sending the most students to the state Project Achievement and Leadership in Action programs. We pride ourselves not just on blue ribbons, but in performing more than 1300 hours of service to our community and excelling in leadership projects locally, regionally and statewide. Furthermore, we have students serving on the district and state boards of directors and 4-H’ers winning college scholarships, serving as camp counselors and being part of the performing arts group Georgia 4-H Clovers and Company.

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

Although Bleckley County Extension does not have a Family and Consumer Sciences agent based in the office, we strive to assist local residents with their questions. Common questions regard food safety, food preservation, and treating mold and mildew. These topics and others are answered through a wide variety of free UGA Extension publications available at the county office or by phone conferences with Family and Consumer Sciences agents in surrounding counties.

ugaextension.org/bleckley
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 programs like 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.