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
Brooks County Extension is committed to meeting the needs of Brooks County commodity producers through field troubleshooting and research efforts. Annually, Brooks County Extension conducts approximately 15 to 20 research trials or projects to assist producers with agronomic production issues and challenges. In 2018, one of the applied research trials addressed disease control for one of Georgia’s favorite and most valuable crops, watermelon. Brooks County is home to approximately 254 acres of watermelons, a production level which equates to more than $1.5 million in farm-gate value, and annually places Brooks County in the top 19 counties for watermelon production in Georgia. However, each year watermelon producers in Brooks County and throughout Georgia face potential challenges with their disease management programs and profitability margins from the threat and development of Phytophthora fruit rot. To address this production challenge, Brooks County Extension collaborated with two of Brooks County’s watermelon producers to conduct both in-field and postharvest efficacy fungicide application research trials. Evaluations of several fungicide products and combination fungicide spray programs were assessed to determine the level of control provided against Phytophthora fruit rot. The results from the Brooks County Extension watermelon disease trial were analyzed and recommendations were prepared to provide the most effective fungicide options for suppression of Phytophthora fruit rot. The most recent recommendations, developed with contributions from Brooks County Extension research trials, were shared with watermelon producers throughout the Southeast U.S. at the annual Southeast Regional Fruit and Vegetable Conference in Savannah, Georgia.

Brooks County Extension supports the dairy industry throughout south Georgia. Brooks County is home to more than 11,000 commercial dairy cows, which equates to a farm-gate value of more than $34 million. In 2018, Brooks County Extension collaborated with University of Florida (UF) College of Veterinary Medicine and UF Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences to form the Southeast Dairy Stewardship Program. This educational programming addresses milk quality on dairy farms, provides participants Confined Animal Feeding Operation credits and contributes toward National Dairy FARM program employee–training requirements. In addition, throughout the year, Brooks County Extension offers nutrient-management consultation to assist dairies with creating required nutrient-management plans.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
Brooks County Extension is dedicated to the education and growth of Brooks County youth. To meet this need and introduce 4-H to the youngest members of the community, a Brooks County Cloverbud 4-H Club was developed in 2014 to include kindergarten to fourth-grade students. The club began with five members, but has expanded to an enrollment of 25 students with an additional three new Brooks County 4-H volunteer leaders. Cloverbud educational classes include STEM (science, technology, engineering and math), art, agriculture, citizenship and community-service lessons. Annually, Cloverbud members are provided the opportunity to participate in an educational summer field trip. Most recently, Cloverbud 4-H’ers have visited local farms, Challenger Learning Center and Flint RiverQuarium. Brooks County Extension is proud to provide early educational opportunities to children throughout the county to enhance growth, development and participation in Georgia 4–H throughout their school years.

ugaextension.org/brooks
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.