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

Beginning September 20, 2017, through April 10, 2018, 152 youth participated in the Relationship Smarts program offered through UGA Extension in Columbus-Muscogee County.

These youth were given information and lessons on healthy relationships, conflict resolution and relationship decision-making. Out of 152 youth reached, 143 graduated from the program, with 94.1 percent of participants completing 75 percent or more of the program. A total of 132 youth completed an overall program-evaluation survey, answering questions about the program material. Out of 132 responses, 81.8 percent responded that they have been in a dating relationship. Surveyors indicated that 58.1 percent of them felt a little or a lot more confident in establishing relationships, 57.9 percent would recommend the program to their peers and 48.8 percent said they felt better about themselves.

One participant commented, “The relationship class changed my outlook on relationships because now I know that you and your partner must move at the same speed or you will have a shaky relationship. So, taking a relationship slowly will give you time to get to know each other.” Another participant responded, “It is important to learn how to start good relationships and how good relationships can last. Lots of people don’t know how to communicate, which leads to bad relationships and people being sad or hurt. Better communication helps everyone and leads to good relationships and happy people.” When asked what participants liked best about the program, responses included; “It taught me to wait for things,” “Techniques for people in relationships,” “I’m a completely different person,” “Tips on healthy dating,” and “Learning about how to keep a healthy relationship with people close to me.”

Based on average responses and evaluation, participants learned healthy relationship skills and tools, and they practiced putting them in action.
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.

Learn more at: extension.uga.edu