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

Master Gardener Extension Volunteers (MGEVs) and UGA Extension staff in Chattooga County offered local schools an opportunity for supplemental classroom instruction. Chattooga County schools accepted this invitation with appreciation and support, and now Chattooga County MGEVs serve third- through fifth-graders at four elementary schools on a monthly and as-needed basis. This past year, Trion City Schools partnered with Chattooga County Extension and Chattooga County MGEVs to begin what’s called the “Green Team Project.” This program is for selected high-school students interested in expanded studies in the fields of horticulture and agriculture and related topics to help maintain an outdoor classroom at the school. In addition to providing hands-on instruction in a variety of gardening-related subjects and introducing related career opportunities, the project also involves co-curricular academic enrichment tied not only to students’ core studies in subject areas including science, math, social studies, economics, health and nutrition, but also to concepts of environmental stewardship and other community service programs at school. On-site work experiences and educational field trips are offered. Students complete 135 hours of time each year, with a minimum of three years of program participation. Goals for the project include giving program participants unique educational opportunities and hands-on experiences using horticultural and agricultural topics as the facilitator; providing farm-to-table opportunities for Trion City Schools students under Department of Agricultural guidelines; and creating and maintaining an established outdoor classroom, consisting of a greenhouse, raised-bed planters, herb garden, food garden, pollinator garden and pond area, as well as technology-centered gardens that all students and the community will be able to use, enjoy and continue to develop for years to come. In September 2018, the Green Team received a Gold-level Golden Radish Award for extraordinary work in farm-to-school initiatives, coordinated and presented by the Georgia Department of Education, the Georgia Department of Agriculture, the Georgia Department of Public Health, UGA Extension and Georgia Organics.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Over the past 12 years, 4-H has provided the Certified Teen Leader training program curriculum to train seventh- through 12th-grade students at the beginning of each school year. Training generally takes three to four hours based on the number of participants. All training offers 4-H’ers hands-on learning activities to become engaged, reflect and apply what they learned. Students demonstrate what they have learned during leadership opportunities like 4-H dances, Project Achievement, community service projects, summer activities and 4-H camp.

One hundred-twelve students completed the Georgia 4-H Teen Leadership training program. Evaluations following the training showed that all of the students improved their knowledge about the role of a Teen Leader and the ages and stages of 9- to 11-year-olds, and they all felt confident handling difficult situations. Eighty-six percent of students who completed the training remained active in 4-H throughout high school. Most served as Teen Leaders at 4-H dances, and 70 senior 4-H’ers served as judges at Cloverleaf Project Achievement (CPA) and Project Achievement. All have facilitated group meetings, directed groups and led educational workshops. Thirty-one have been elected to district leadership positions, serving as district or state officers and presiding at assemblies.

ugaextension.org/chattooga
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