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 & NATURAL RESOURCES

The demand for local foods is growing in Clayton County. Developing a local food system will address concerns regarding the lack of access to healthy foods. The existing Clayton County Extension Farmers Market serves as a food hub and informal aggregator. The UGA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) grant fund initiative delivers nutrition education and six food preparation demonstrations at the farmers market using local foods. Through the market, Master Gardener Extension Volunteers made 420 direct and 1,200 indirect contacts with local residents. In addition to 23 urban producers participating in the market, 10 local farmers attended a food-safety workshop. With a total of 49 market days, 93 percent of customers reported they had better access to fresh, affordable foods through the market.

HOUSING OUTREACH & PUBLIC EDUCATION

The Clayton County Extension housing and consumer economics program offered a series of classes called HOPE (Housing Outreach and Public Education) to educate constituents about available support for foreclosure prevention, the home-buying process and homeless placement. During 2017–18, a total of 763 constituents participated. Seven constituents purchased homes in the metro Atlanta area and were provided down-payment assistance through the Georgia Dream Homeownership Program as a result of attending UGA Extension’s Homebuyer Education Course. Twenty-eight homeless families were placed in stable housing for 12 months and 13 families were able to save their homes from foreclosure.

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

Obesity, poor nutrition and limited physical activity are significant health concerns that often lead to chronic disease. On average, 82,251 Clayton County residents receive SNAP benefits each month. SNAP-Ed offers the Food Talk program, which consists of four to six classes designed to enhance healthy-eating behaviors. The classes cover food resource management, food safety and preparation, healthy weight management, and physical activity. In 2018, Clayton County Extension delivered the standalone “Food Talk: Farmers Market” classes at the Extension farmers market to help promote increased consumption of fruits and vegetables. Seventy-five low-income participants enrolled in the UGA SNAP-Ed Food Talk: Better U program. A total of 546 participants enrolled in the Food Talk Farmers Market program. Fifty-three percent of participants completed the “Food Talk: Better U” course, totaling 619 hours of classes.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Clayton County 4-H staff led in-school fifth-grade club meetings and assisted counselors and principals in documenting lessons taught for finance and career portfolios for the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI). Many schools lack the resources needed for fun, interactive ways to engage and teach these lessons. The 4-H staff delivered the finance lesson activity for “The Spending Game (Your Money, Your Future).” Project Achievement career portfolios helped 4-H students with reading, research, public speaking, career readiness and writing skills. In 2018, all counselors in the Clayton County schools met and discussed the benefits of 4-H and CCRPI. Students in fourth- through 12th-grade career portfolio lessons increased their understanding of finance and budgeting.
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.