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

Over the past five years, the farm-gate value of the many agricultural commodities grown and produced in Crisp County averaged more than $99 million per year. Agriculture is the backbone of Georgia’s overall economy, and in Crisp its importance and sustainability are at the forefront of Agricultural and Natural Resources (ANR) Agent Josh Grant’s program in Cordele.

Watermelon is the namesake of Crisp, and for the second year in a row, Grant has collaborated in Fusarium wilt research with UGA specialists at Cordele’s very own 5-acre Watermelon Research Park. In 2018, the ANR program continued its annual production meetings covering various commodities such as cotton, peanuts, corn, soybeans, watermelon and pecans. On-site consultations were up, with Grant answering growers’ and homeowners’ questions in-person during more than 350 visits. Cross-programming with 4-H and Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) led to multiple educational outreach programs. Grant grew the educational outreach portion by being invited to give more than 10 presentations on various topics including agricultural production, forest maintenance, basic entomology, landscaping and hurricane recovery. This past year brought challenges including reduced county livestock show attendance, commodity tariffs and storm damage, and Grant adapted and continues to address issues that will be long-lasting but conquerable.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Community service is one of the activities that allows Crisp County 4-H’ers to become better citizens. Outreach is always a goal for 4-H because the 4-H Slogan is to “Learn by Doing.” Each year, the 4-H leaders try to focus on ways to make our local 4-H and community better, so our 2018 focus was on community service. Amanda S. is one 4-H’er who has served her community by getting involved with the Crisp County Animal Control Department. Amanda not only volunteered her time helping, but she raised $560 and donated heat lamps to the department. She made a big difference in the lives of animals and her community. Jordan L. is another 4-H’er who went above and beyond the call of duty to impact her community by putting smiles on senior citizens’ faces. It started with painting flower pots and planting flowers at three assisted living facilities in Crisp. Jordan didn’t stop there, making several visits to play bingo and sing songs with the seniors and she always brought treats. She also got the Beta Club involved, making the impact more effective. As you can see, community service was a primary goal for both Amanda and Jordan and they made an impact in their community.

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

UGA Extension FACS Agent Rebecca Stackhouse has made communitywide collaborative partners she works with for programming. Stackhouse offers healthy relationship education for teens, financial education, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA), certification in CPR/AED/first aid and lifeguarding, ServSafe®, childcare provider education, and continuing education for food service workers. She works with Crisp County FACS teachers to deliver programming to middle school students. She has worked in collaboration with the ANR and 4-H agents and community partners on a pre-K raised bed garden and programming. As the FACS agent, Stackhouse works hard to provide expertise through training, research and publications to positively affect community members.
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.