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

UGA Extension in Decatur County and the Decatur County 4-H Club promotes agriculture literacy through STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) programming, enrichment, citizenship and general 4-H programming locally, statewide and nationally. Improving agricultural knowledge increases a citizen's ability to make better choices related to their overall health and well-being.

Many country residents do not know about the production of plant and animal products, realize the economic impact of agriculture, or consider that many laws and policies are related to agriculture. Even in an agrarian-dominated community such as Decatur County, people do not comprehend the essential relationship between agriculture, jobs, food, clothing and way of life.

With more than 24,000 reported multigenerational contacts within 2017 and more than 21,000 contacts in 2018, collaboration from agriculture-based entities has strengthened the success of efforts raising awareness of agricultural issues in Decatur County and beyond.

Decatur County 4-H continues to lead many educational efforts locally, statewide and nationally. 4-H staff implement agriculture education through STEM enrichment for elementary youth, agriscience field days and national conference presentations, as well as by hosting frequent hands-on experiential learning opportunities. Participants in agriculture programming reported that their attitude toward the importance of agriculture changed as they learned how all-encompassing agriculture is to the national, state and local economies. Adults and youth alike were amazed at the economic value generated by food and fiber production and their associated industries. Over the two-year project term, an increase in knowledge of agronomics and agribusiness has been reported.

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The newest Decatur County Agriculture and Natural Resources agent, Nancy Bostick, supported local peanut growers by assisting them with peanut-maturity rating throughout the growing season. In 2018, nearly 80 samples of peanuts were blasted to reveal the hull color and determine maturity, which in turn indicates optimal harvest time for peanuts. Up to 30 percent of total yield production occurs in peanuts during the last three weeks of growth, so it is critical that growers make proper digging decisions to maximize yield and profit. Another significant program Decatur County offered this year was soil and tissue samples. In 2018, 377 soil samples were tested to determine soil profile. With this information, homeowners and growers can decide which fertilizers to use in order to make their action plan for the growing season most affordable. Additionally, 205 tissue samples were used to determine the nutrients within plants. By using both the soil- and tissue-testing programs, Decatur County Extension can help growers and homeowners make decisions to maximize yield.
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.