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

For the second straight year, Dooly County farmers were hit hard by a hurricane. Hurricane Michael barreled through the county on October 10, 2018. Cotton and pecans suffered the most damage. Before the storm, cotton farmers in Dooly were harvesting one of the best crops they’d had in years. They were picking up to 1,700 pounds of cotton per acre before the storm, and as low as 400 pounds per acre after the storm. The county lost 5 percent of its pecan orchards with yield losses up to 30 percent. Immediately after the storm, Dooly County UGA Extension Agent Ronnie Barentine began reporting damage estimates to Extension economists, state and national legislators, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This information was critical to helping economists and officials determine the type and amount of disaster relief needed to help farmers recover. Emails and newsletters were used to inform farmers of area disaster meetings and disaster programs available. Barentine assisted farmers with loss reports to crop insurance companies and assisted farmers with disaster relief applications.

USING PESTICIDES WISELY

Pesticides are very important to crop production. They are used to control weeds, insects and diseases. Pesticides are very effective on these pests, but they must be used in a way that protects the environment and farm workers. Barentine conducted a series of meetings that taught farmworkers how to use pesticides wisely and safely. The training included information on equipment operation, drift and volatility control, tank cleanout, protection of sensitive crops, endangered species, and bees. In addition, the training focused on farmworker protection. Workers learned about emergency information and assistance, personal protection equipment, decontamination sites, pesticide warning labels, restricted entry intervals and clean-up. Applicants received two hours of training that included certification in the Using Pesticides Wisely program and the Environmental Protection Agency’s Worker Protection Standard. A total of 40 farmworkers completed the trainings. In addition, UGA Extension in Dooly County had seven people complete testing to receive a private pesticide license. Dooly County Extension held weed control, cotton production and peanut production meetings that informed farmers of pesticide use and safety. A total of 170 persons attended these trainings.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The Dooly County 4-H Club has enrolled 530 students in our organization this year with the help of our new 4-H Youth County Extension Program Assistant (CEPA) Quadarius Hardy. Dooly County has a total of 24 monthly club meetings held during school hours at Dooly County public schools and Fullington Academy. For the first time in about seven years, Dooly County had 10 club members participate in statewide Junior Conference at Rock Eagle 4-H Center. Nine Dooly 4-H’ers enjoyed Cloverleaf Camp at the Burton 4-H Center on Tybee Island with intern Shelby Sangster prior to the Dooly County 4-H CEPA position being filled last summer. This year, Dooly County 4-H began working closely with the Salt of the Earth after-school program in order to fill a need in the community and connect with more of our youth. Hardy took approximately 36 youth to the Georgia Aquarium in December. He is working diligently to provide the young people of Dooly County the opportunity to see all that Georgia 4-H has to offer. There are many more upcoming events on the schedule for our 4-H’ers to look forward to as we continue to build our 4-H program in Dooly County.
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.