2018 ANNUAL REPORT: DOUGLAS COUNTY

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

UGA Extension in Douglas County is receiving an increasing number of requests for help in food production, storage and use. Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent Kevin Livingston established the Garden Mentors program to bring Douglas County Extension staff and volunteers together to address food-related needs in the local community. The program includes training, networking and matching volunteers with schools, churches and community organizations. Ten garden mentors have assisted in the establishment of five garden programs in the community. One such program is Midway Community Resource Center’s garden plots. The center offered 30 garden plots to the local neighborhood for a small annual fee. In the first season, 15 of 30 plots were in production. Another new garden is Sanctuary Farm, a rehabilitation garden provided by Douglas County Felony Drug Court. Tim Pruett, the farm coordinator, said “Working with a Garden Mentor has made it possible for us to move forward in establishing an educational garden for people transitioning away from drug addiction. The garden is a win-win for all parties involved.” Twenty-one members of the drug rehab program worked the garden. In addition, the garden produced 1,332 pounds of vegetables, which were donated to a local food pantry.

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

To educate youth on the importance of developing positive and healthy relationships, Douglas County Family and Consumer Sciences Agent Susan Culpepper taught Relationship Smarts to 50 students in Douglas County. Students participated in six lessons from the Relationship Smarts 3.0 curriculum. During the classes, the teens learned about self-esteem, maturity and healthy relationship behaviors. Participants completed a survey at the end of the Relationship Smarts series which assessed changes in participants’ beliefs and their confidence in their ability to use the skills learned. Eighty-seven percent felt that they were more confident than before the program in establishing a healthy relationship. One participant said, “This program will help me find the right person, stay out of danger and help my friends with their relationships. This program really helps me to handle conflict in a healthy way.”

To expand the program to reach more youth, Culpepper recruited six youth educators to attend a grant-funded Relationship Smarts training. She is developing a local coalition dedicated to educating youth and preventing teen pregnancy, dating violence and substance abuse.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Douglas County 4-H offers members frequent opportunities to learn and develop skills in food and nutrition. 4-H professionals led a daylong 4-H class three times during the year. The 65 4-H’ers who attended learned how to plan healthy meals, portion control, food safety and basic cooking skills and created their own salsa recipe from mystery ingredients. After attending the class, a majority of the participating 4-H’ers said that they will recreate the recipe at home and plan to eat more fruits and vegetables. The goal of the 4-H Cooking Club is for each member to become certified by Georgia 4-H in Youth Foods and Nutrition. Participants receive 15 hours of training to become certified. Club members were treated to a behind-the-scenes tour of the Huddle House corporate kitchen and received their own set of knives and utensils to practice their skills at home. 4-H Cooking Club graduates now give food demonstrations in the community.
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.