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

The Effingham County 4-H Club delivers quality education programming that strives to build young people into good leaders, good community members and good human beings by providing opportunities for leadership, community engagement, personal growth and fun through a variety of activities and events. The Effingham 4-H program serves youth in fourth through 12th grades and is open to all young people. In 2018, more than 2,300 students participated in various programs through 4-H. During these programs, students learned and excelled in leadership, citizenship, public speaking and critical thinking and engaged in building teamwork, character and good sportsmanship. Effingham 4-H offers a variety of in-school and after-school educational activities. Our goal is to help each young person to find a niche where they feel successful. Some of the programs offered include Project Achievement; Project SAFE (Shooting Awareness, Fun and Education) archery, shotgun and BB teams; Kids in the Kitchen Club; Make Me Move Club; STEM Club; Lego Challenge; summer camps; and many more. These programs allow students to engage in a positive learning experience. Additionally, Effingham 4-H has a standing tradition of excellence in the area of camping. Effingham was slated as the top camping county in Georgia for 2018, with more than 315 student campers. 4-H emphasizes the practical application of knowledge or “learning by doing” to develop skills and acquire a sense of responsibility, initiative and self-worth. Through leadership development and creating intentional processes, Effingham 4-H has been able to expand the leadership capacity in youth involved in the 4-H program. Increased leadership skills and abilities have been noticed beyond the 4-H program, reaching schools and the greater community.

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Effingham County agricultural enterprises are estimated to have exceeded $53 million in 2018. UGA Extension in Effingham County functions as a service not only to those entrepreneurs engaged in agriculture, but also to homeowners and industry throughout the area. On average, Effingham County Extension works with 120 individual county residents per month to distribute sound scientific recommendations to solve a broad array of issues involving wildlife, water, soil, crop production and livestock production, to name a few. More than 632 soil, plant and water samples have were submitted through our office in 2018 to help address those issues. Of all the industries represented in Effingham agriculture, forestry products comprise a significant income flow, second only to row crops. Several research projects that aim to increase forest productivity are currently underway through the county office’s Agriculture and Natural Resources programming. We are working with a number of producers to assess the feasibility of forestry weed control methods and with several others to find practical ways of dealing with pine tip moths. Weed competition in young pine plantations have measurable impact on yield throughout the life of the plantation. Pine tip moths are a severe problem in flatwoods systems, as early infestations of the moth render pines unmarketable as saw timber and decrease yield of pulpwood production. The cost-efficient practices under study show promise in increasing pulpwood tonnage on an annual basis. With the $10 per ton pulpwood prices we saw in 2017, increasing production annually by a quarter of a ton would have yielded an additional $1 million in farm-gate value. These production studies give local producers specialized insights that improve their business sustainability.
**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.