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

Service-learning, particularly for youth, offers young people unique opportunities to link what they learn in the classroom to real-world situations in their communities. Such opportunities help young people learn how to negotiate, plan and execute ideas, which will be helpful as they enter college or careers. However, empowering young people to think critically in identifying a community need, devising a plan, marketing a project, and facilitating a service-learning project to initiative, can prove a challenging process that requires time, patience, mentoring and support on behalf of a caring adult.

Many local 4-H students have expressed thoughts about how there are few opportunities for service projects that are truly youth-planned and led in the community. In 2018, nine 4-H members in seventh through 12th grades participated in the 4-H Seeds of Service Program. Through this initiative, students learned valuable project-management skills while pledging their hands to significant service. Combined, the students collected 1,095 items for nine entities in need and $213 for a longtime local firefighter battling a disease.

During project reflection activities, one 4-H’er stated, “Nowhere else am I empowered like I am in this 4-H program. Most everywhere else, we are told what to do and how to do it with little freedom to investigate and explore. I like how we can come to you with any idea and you are open to helping us implement the idea without barriers.” Another 4-H’er commented, “This opportunity showed me that you don’t have to change the world all at once, but just help one person when you can. I learned that no matter who you are, how young or old you are or where you’re from, you can make a difference. I’m glad I was able to be a part of this service project, and I’m happy to know it helped someone who needs it.”

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Center rot in onions can cause significant damage in an onion crop. At times up to 100 percent yield can be affected and severe economic damage can be noted. Research efforts were made to determine the stage of growth and the fungicide application that successfully controls and minimizes incidence of center rot in onions. Because center rot in onions is such an economically damaging pathogen, local Vidalia onion agents from Toombs, Tattnall, Evans and Montgomery counties, along with UGA vegetable pathologist Bhabesh Dutta, designed and conducted research trials to investigate and determine the effect onion growth stage has in center rot incidence. Throughout 2017 and 2018, research concluded that utilizing Kocide 3000 during bulb initiation, bulb swelling or all three growth stages, farmers can reduce their center rot incidence by up to 20 percent. This would be a more than $5,000 dollar per-acre value to the grower in fields with significant center rot incidences. Utilizing the information found in this research and incorporating Kocide 3000 into their spray programs, farmers reduced their center-rot incidence while increasing the yield and economic value of their annual onion crop.
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.