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
Gilmer County 4-H is focused on developing essential life skills for students in our school systems. For grades six through 12 in 2018, the program focused on developing healthy relationships, with the 4-H agent teaching six lessons from the Relationship Smarts 2.0 curriculum. Each lesson focused on communication, mutual respect, commitment, shared values, conflict management and how to recognize patterns of unhealthy relationships. As a result of these lessons, 59 percent of the participants reported that they were very likely to use the skills learned. Programs for fourth and fifth grades focused on career awareness and healthy lifestyles. Gilmer County also had more than 150 students participate in public-speaking contests at the county and district level. These students explore an area of interest, develop a presentation, and present to a panel of judges and audience members. Because of their participation in Project Achievement, 80 percent of the students surveyed indicated that they are more comfortable speaking in front of people. 4-H continues to offer opportunities that enable students to become self-directing, productive and contributing members of society.

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES
Agriculture is the lifeblood of Gilmer County. Poultry is the largest agricultural enterprise in the county, with more than 500 poultry facilities plus a processing plant. UGA Extension in Gilmer County has worked with local growers in the areas of ventilation, litter testing and pasture management. Agritourism is also an extremely important segment here. Apples have been the major attraction for many years, but now wine grapes and local vineyards are a growing aspect of our agriculture, and we’ve worked with both of these commodities in the areas of disease and insect control. Because apples are a fresh product, UGA Extension is also assisting growers with FSMA, the Food Safety Modernization Act. The Gilmer County Master Gardener Extension Volunteers promote UGA Extension and also improve the community with their projects such as the Ellijay Farmers Market, teaching at the Boys and Girls Club, a demonstration raised-bed garden, Make-N-Take workshops and other activities.

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES
The Gilmer County Family and Consumer Sciences agent provides citizens with education in the areas of family, the home, finances, food, nutrition and more. For example, the Extension office offers a cancer-prevention cooking class as well as other classes on nutrition and money/budgeting where participants can learn about guarding against identity theft, tracking expenses, balancing a budget, boosting credit scores and ways to save money. Responses to surveys revealed that attendees were tracking their spending habits, trying to pay bills on time and asking why personal information is needed before giving it out. They also understood the significance of having a good credit history with one participant stating, “I learned it is important to build my credit for my future.”

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) offers classes including Food Talk, a six-week class series, or Food Talk: Better U, which is a four-week class series, to enhance healthy eating and lifestyle choices related to food resource management, food safety, food preparation, weight management and physical activity. In 2018, 105 low-income participants enrolled in Food Talk classes and completed 419 hours in class. According to survey information, all participants gained the confidence to practice one or more healthy, food-related behaviors.

ugaextension.org/gilmer
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.