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

Hancock County Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) agents provide answers for homeowners and farmers about many topics including soil fertility, safe pesticide application, water usage, home gardening, and crop and pasture management. UGA Extension in Hancock County conducts soil, forage and water testing through the Agricultural and Environmental Services Laboratories at UGA. By correctly identifying plants, insects, diseases and weeds, ANR agents help Georgians make sound pesticide-use decisions daily. These fertilization and pest-management recommendations help reduce unnecessary pollution inputs into Georgia waterways. All these services are available through local UGA Extension offices, which provide needs-based programming. Locally produced food and fiber has become as a big sector of agricultural production in Hancock County.

Beef cattle producers are an integral part of the community and their industry supports multiple feed and supply stores, as well as machinery dealers and mechanical repair shops. The area was in a moderate drought in late spring, becoming a severe drought in late summer and into the fall. Combined with low beef prices, the drought created financial hardship. Producers were able to develop drought plans that organized cattle inventory as selling groups in order of sales depending on the length and severity of the drought as well as the method of sale for each group. They also established supplemental feeding plans and built up soil fertility so that maintenance would cost less and recovery would be more complete and less costly.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Georgia 4-H’s mission is to assist youth in acquiring knowledge, developing life skills and forming attitudes that will enable them to become self-directing, productive and contributing members of society. This is accomplished through hands-on learning experiences focused on agricultural and environmental issues, agriculture awareness, leadership, communication skills, foods and nutrition, health, energy conservation and citizenship.

The Hancock County 4-H Club has made a tremendous impact on the lives of young people through local programming delivered in the school system. All students, not just 4-H’ers, from ninth through 12th grade were invited to one-hour 4-H sessions. Each session focused on a part of the Step by Step: College Awareness and Planning program developed by the National Association for College Admission Counseling. To complement the program, Extension staff came up with a set of worksheets for each student to complete. Each session at Hancock Central High School was attended by an average of 30 to 40 students.

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

UGA Extension Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) provide answers for Georgians about canning, freezing, food preservation and safety each and every day. Foodborne illness can be costly to the state and community and can even be deadly. The elderly, chronically ill and young children are at high risk for complications to foodborne illnesses that may require hospitalization. Improperly thawed or mishandled food can easily cause economic disaster. To assist county residents, publications featuring all aspects of food preservation and food safety are available in our local office. Also, UGA Extension FACS agents provide ServSafe® certification classes for individuals in the food service industry. This certification is required by all food service establishments. Hancock County Extension assisted the Housing Authority of the City of Sparta this year by identifying mold in the housing units and providing information to apply for a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant to use to renovate these facilities.
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.