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

Youth are faced with many challenges in today’s society. Deciding on health choices that will impact the future don’t seem to be in the forefront of their minds. Choices made today can have a major bearing on their future welfare.

Of ninth grade youth, 79.5 percent report negative risk with alcohol consumption. That is 3.3 percent higher than the state average. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Haralson County ranks fourth in the state of Georgia and 200th in the nation for being a vulnerable opioid epidemic county. In 2017, the CDC reports that nearly six of every 100 middle school students (5.6 percent) and nearly 20 of every 100 high school students (19.6 percent) reported current use of some type of tobacco product.

An event held in Haralson County, called “Teen Maze,” is designed to increase adolescents’ understanding of personal responsibility and the importance of making positive life choices. The event further expands their knowledge and encourages them to make informed decisions about their health and well-being. Teen Maze has been described as a life-sized game board to help teens see firsthand the consequences of negative life choices. More than 600 youth had the opportunity to experience real life consequences through 15 Teen Maze scenarios. A teacher stated, “Students shared several comments about their impression of the maze. They said this seemed very real and they would never want to be in this situation.”

Youth in the Haralson County 4-H Club are encouraged to seek opportunities on the state level. Jade Lewis served on the Northwest District Junior Board of Directors, Jadyn Williams was selected to perform with the 4-H performing arts group Clovers and Company, and Dalton Williams was selected as a stage crew member. Some 4-H’ers were selected to serve as State Ambassadors, including Rachel Ibbetson (STEM), Rebekah Ibbetson (Healthy Living), Melody Goodwin and Rylee Sharpton (Health Rocks). Christina Gavazzi was selected to be a 4-H camp counselor and received Master 4-H status for earning a 4-H scholarship. Five 4-H’ers attended 4-H State Congress and Haralson County was awarded four awards at District Project Achievement. 4-H Coordinator Dorothea Graham was honored for Excellence in Animal Science Education and Citizenship in 4-H Youth.

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The Haralson County Extension office helps farmers and homeowners with inquiries regarding soil fertility, pesticides, water usage, home gardening, and crop and pasture management on a daily basis. Through the Agricultural and Environmental Services Laboratories at UGA, we conduct soil, feed and animal waste testing. The Haralson County Extension office helps its community members to correctly identify plants, insects and weeds. The office enjoys collaborating with organizations like the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Haralson County Cattlemen, Haralson County Farm Bureau and neighboring Extension offices to provide educational programs and events for the agricultural community.

In November of 2018, a new Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) professional was added to the Haralson County Extension team. This is the first time in quite a while that there has been an agricultural correspondent in the office. The new ANR educator is here to further assist community members with anything they may need, from helping identify a rogue flower in a home garden or helping a land owner to understand the results of a soil test. The Haralson County Extension office is here to help all members of 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.