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

UGA Extension in Irwin County serves as the connection to unbiased information for the citizens of Irwin County. A key component of our programming is agricultural production meetings where agents and specialists present the most current information. In 2018, there were 11 such meetings where information was presented to a total of 615 farmers and agribusiness leaders in attendance. These meetings provided the latest information on cotton, corn, peanut and pecan production. Other meetings addressed disease, weed control, cotton defoliation, irrigation strategies and more. In addition to these meetings, our office staff also has opportunities to collaborate in the planning and presentation of information on numerous other topics, such as agriculture awareness events for fifth graders. Applied research is another way to gather and share information. Through applied research on-farm trials, information is collected on the local level. In 2018, our office staff participated in four trials focused on peanut row pattern, peanut burrower bug, two cotton variety trials and a corn variety trial. Educational efforts go beyond the county boundary through presentations of significant on-farm trial results to area, district, state and national venues in presentation or poster form.

The traditional role of helping our clientele one-on-one is still our strongest asset. Much of the work conducted throughout the year is via phone, office and farm or site visits. We provide a strong program in soil, water, nutrient and tissue sampling. Irwin County was fourth in the state for soil sample submissions through the Extension office. Our clientele’s immediate concerns pertaining to production agriculture or other issues require precise answers to help make decisions in a multitude of situations. For example, Irwin County Extension conducts a major effort to determine peanut maturity. In 2018, a total of 421 individual tests were conducted to determine proper peanut-maturity dates.

Our efforts are shared through various communications methods in addition to office, phone and site visits. Twenty-eight newsletters were emailed as appropriate throughout 2018, with each issue reaching 400 farmers and agribusinesses. Information updates are also sent via text messages to 170 farmers per message. We use Facebook and maintain an excellent webpage.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The Irwin County 4-H Club is the largest youth organization in the county with 360 members from ages nine to 19. Two Irwin County 4-H members were District Board members who led Irwin County 4-H members on the district level. We have 17 individual clubs that meet each month and each club elects officers. Each year, we hold an officer training at our office. These officers come together to learn the leadership duties of their position so that they can conduct the club meetings. Thirty-one 4-H members developed their public speaking and leadership skills by participating in 4-H Project Achievement. Two participants went on to compete at State Congress. We also participate in 4-H Poultry Judging, 4-H Consumer Judging and community development. We have begun training for the 4-H Horse Quiz Bowl. We also had one of our 4-H members win third place in the Dean’s Award at 4-H State Congress. Another 4-H member was a scholarship recipient.
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.