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

The Jefferson County 4-H Club starts in fifth grade with lessons that teach about agriculture grown in our county. Sixth-graders are taught the importance of refraining from tobacco, drugs and alcohol. Seventh-grade 4-H’ers receive Project WET (Water Education for Teachers) lessons, in which they learn that water of sufficient quality and quantity is important for all water users. Eighth-grade students learn about financial literacy and homeschool student participate in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) curriculum, while high school students perform community and leadership activities to prepare them for their future.

Events that our 4-H’ers participate in are mini-booth exhibits in the county fair, Cotton Boll and Consumer Judging, Junior Conference, District Project Achievement, 4-H Day at the State Capitol, State Council, Goat Show Team, Dairy Heifer Team, Poultry Judging Team and summer camp.

This past fall, we took our fifth-grade students to the UGA Southeast Research and Education Center in Midville, Georgia, where they rotated between classes for poultry and cotton, Native American history, honeybees, cow and goat, growing grapes, peanut harvest and finishing the day up with a tour of the research facility.

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The diversity of Jefferson County agriculture was showcased in this year’s Jefferson County Ag and Safety Day held in April. This event, organized by UGA Extension in Jefferson County, was open to the general public and drew a crowd of more than 600 attendees. Each booth was decorated to highlight a different commodity produced in the county and provided educational materials on those commodities. Volunteers assisted event-goers to give them more information on these commodities, how they are grown and processed, and the by-products they contribute. Local agribusinesses collaborated to display equipment and provide equipment-safety education and demonstrations along with the local firefighter’s association and police. Agribusinesses also provided sponsorship and assisted with setup for the one-day event. The local cattlemen’s association served hamburgers and various commodity groups, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service, provided educational materials and promotional items. Area 4-H’ers brought livestock and discussed care, fitting and preparing for shows and general facts about the species. Area musicians volunteered to entertain the crowd and the Jefferson County Farm Bureau arranged for the AirMed helicopter to arrive for the day.

Commodities highlighted included peanuts, honey, vegetables, forestry, corn, soybeans, pecans, strawberries, wheat and oats, cotton, poultry/eggs, beef, and dairy. A petting zoo was provided by local farms. Demonstrations included feral-hog trapping systems; how to safely operate hay balers, tractors, lawn mowers and sprayers; home fire safety; bicycle safety, grain bin rescue and safety; target sports safety; and ATV and boating safety by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Attendees perused antique tractors as hit-and-miss engines churned homemade ice cream. Attendees gained a greater appreciation for agriculture and its contributions to Jefferson County.
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.