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 practice of encouraging youth to begin healthy habits at a young age is not a new phenomenon, but it has proven itself to be an ongoing and fruitful endeavor. In order to promote the importance of healthy lifestyles among the youth of Jones County, the Jones County 4-H Club instituted a series of programs over the course of two years to engage students in activities that would increase their awareness and foster lifelong behavioral changes in regard to their personal health. These programs included Relationship Smarts lessons, 4-H Yoga for Kids, and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). One hundred thirty-five Gray Station Middle School and Clifton Ridge Middle School students participated in five Relationship Smarts lessons, and 157 elementary school students participated in 22 4-H Yoga for Kids sessions. After completing their surveys, 91 percent of middle school students who participated in Relationship Smarts lessons indicated an increase in awareness of what a healthy relationship should look like and how to pursue relationships with others while retaining their personal identity. Of the students who participated in 4-H Yoga for Kids, 71 percent exhibited behavioral changes as a result of their continued practice of yoga outside of the organized program. Furthermore, seven EFNEP participants graduated from the program. Of the adults and students who participated, 86 percent of class members indicated an increase in knowledge and 74 percent expressed that they continued to cook the recipes taught in the class.

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The Jones County Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) agent instituted a series of programs and presentations to target environmental areas of interest to residents in the county. These target areas were identified as pond quality, bees, and pollinators and wildlife management. The Jones County ANR agent worked with area agents to provide pollinator-related community programming in the area. Jones County Extension collaborated with Bibb County Extension to host a Pollinator-Friendly Landscapes program series. Program collaborators included Middle Georgia State University, Putnam County Extension, the State Botanical Garden of Georgia and the University of Georgia Franklin College of Arts and Sciences. Topics included alternative pollinators, safe pesticide use, flower types, bees and pollinator-attractive plants. Jones County Extension also conducted a Bees as Pollinators program for the second grade at Gray Elementary School in Jones County and a Shade Gardens for Pollinators presentation for the Gray Garden Club. Eighty-seven percent of participants from the Pollinator-Friendly Landscapes program series indicated that they gained knowledge and that they would share information learned from the series with someone else in the community.

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

Although Jones County does not have a Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) agent based in the county Extension office, we strive to assist local residents with their questions. Common questions cover food safety, food preservation, dealing with mold and mildew, healthy meal planning, nutrition, family budgeting, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) resources and more. These issues and others are answered through a wide variety of free UGA Extension publications available at the county office and phone conferences with FACS agents from surrounding counties. Neighboring FACS agents often conduct programming that our county residents are welcome to attend.
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.