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 Lowndes County 4-H Club has played an active role in teaching educational programming in the Lowndes County School System since the 1950s. 4-H Agent Lynn Hall and 4-H Program Assistant Sarah Baltzell reach more than 1,300 elementary- and middle-school students in 56 club meetings a month. Lessons taught, which all correlate with state standards, address language arts, STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) and leadership skills. Additionally, more than 165 students are being reached through after-school programs like poultry judging and consumer judging. The 4-H Archery Club placed in the top five teams across the state and the shotgun team continues to excel. Lowndes County 4-H volunteers started a new BB shooting sports team last year and club members are preparing for spring competitions. Fourteen middle- and high-school students have submitted portfolios of work collected throughout the 2018 calendar year in preparation for the annual public speaking competition. Two hundred fourth-, fifth- and sixth-grade 4-H'ers participated in the county-level Project Achievement competition. Twenty fifth- and sixth-grade 4-H'ers advanced to the district competition held in Colquitt County. Project Achievement teaches youth writing skills, public speaking skills and independence. Members have written cards to soldiers, collected pop tabs for the Georgia 4-H donation to the Ronald McDonald Houses, collected canned goods for the Second Harvest Food Bank and collected items to send to military servicepeople serving overseas. Lowndes County sent 128 4-H campers from fourth through 11th grade to a variety of camping opportunities. Three senior 4-H'ers competed at State 4-H Congress in Project Achievement with one mastering in their project area. Mastering is the highest honor a 4-H'er can receive.

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Lowndes County has one of the largest populations (114,000) in south Georgia, with a mixture of urban agriculture and traditional agriculture. Traditional agriculture includes cotton, peanuts, soybeans, corn, wheat, hay, pasture, livestock and tobacco. Horticulture crops include pecans, vegetables, muscadines, blueberries, strawberries and, most recently, satsuma mandarins. Forage and livestock issues have been addressed through programs, research and site visits. School gardens have been developed in all Valdosta elementary and middle schools by agents and Master Gardener Extension Volunteers. This partnership resulted in the Valdosta City Schools being awarded the Golden Radish Award from Georgia Organics. Lowndes County continues to lead with the development of the state’s new citrus industry through programming, research, site visits and consultations to growers throughout Georgia. Citrus-research trials and growers are drawing groups and conferences to Lowndes County. A UGA plant pathology class has made Lowndes County a stop on their disease tour for the fourth year in a row to visit a local citrus grower’s operation. In addition, Lowndes County hosted the Southeastern U.S. Citrus Expo at Raisin Cane in November. Members of this group represent citrus hobbyists from Georgia and surrounding states. Since an initial satsuma meeting in Lowndes County, trees planted in Georgia have increased from less than 2,000 statewide to more than 73,000 as of April 2018. Agents continue to support Lowndes County residents’ agricultural needs through personal interactions, phone calls, blogs, newspaper columns and programming for Master Gardeners and the green industry.
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.

Learn more at:
extension.uga.edu