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
Madison County’s population deals with below-average income levels and more than 50 percent of the student population eligible for free and reduced-lunch programs. Many citizens utilize the local food bank for support. Since 2016, County Extension Coordinator Adam Speir has led the Madison County Local Harvest Banquet to raise money for the Madison County Food Bank during times of peak demand — the Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday seasons — and increase agricultural awareness in the citizens of Madison County. Food has been provided by six different farms within Madison County and several more farms across Georgia producing pork, chicken, pecans, honey, sweet potatoes and wheat flour. The money raised has been used to purchase additional fresh fruit and vegetables that are handed out during the holiday season. In 2017 alone, these funds helped support 109 different households, including 338 children, with fresh produce. These fresh foods would not have been available without the funds raised from the Local Harvest Banquets. In 2019, the Madison County Local Harvest Banquet brought fundraising totals to more than $10,000 for the food bank, with nearly 300 people attending the event.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
This past year, the Madison County 4-H Club partnered with local veterinarians for 15 area rabies clinics, providing 168 volunteer hours and helping 300 animals. Teaming up with the local health department, Family Connections, Board of Education and UGA Health Sciences, 4-H’ers helped offer the “Kick Butts” program, Back to School Drive, Science Fun and Relationship Smarts reward trip with 52 teen volunteers contributing 345 volunteer hours. Students donated 100 pounds of pop-tabs (the third-highest from our district per capita) for the Ronald McDonald House, collected school supplies for Hurricane Michael victims, made 110 Halloween Safety Head Start candy bags, collected trash as part of roadside and river cleanup, and collected items for recycling such as plastic bottles, batteries and shredded paper. 4-H teen volunteers supported drug awareness and peer trainings on healthy lifestyles with more than 910 total volunteer hours. Thirty-five of these teen volunteers were surveyed and 50 percent stated that they had positive feelings, increased awareness of the less fortunate and heightened appreciation for helping; 63 percent learned new skills; and 48 percent felt they achieved successful goal results through teamwork. These 4-H’ers are becoming more respectful of the community due to these life lessons and opportunities in 4-H.

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES
Taking off Pounds Sensibly is a weight-loss and healthy-eating program based out of Ila, Georgia. Fifteen women meet weekly as a support group to develop and increase healthy-eating practices. As a special presenter, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent Brad Averill discussed with the group what information they would find appropriate in achieving weight-loss goals and higher quality of life. Over several meetings, there were discussions on the MyPlate program and how a balance of foods can assist in sensible weight loss over the long term, the different kinds of physical activity that are necessary for weight loss, and a large group exercise class with chair yoga, stretching and deep-breathing exercises.
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.