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

Marion County isn’t a major producer of row crops, but the county’s crop diversity makes the job of the county Extension agent exciting and somewhat challenging. Marion County’s agricultural enterprises cover almost every commodity that Georgia is famous for, including peanuts, corn, cotton, soybeans, peaches and pecans, as well as poultry and a few acres of blueberries. The top agricultural commodity for Marion County is poultry, followed by timber and hay.

Early in the year, the Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) agent for UGA Extension in Marion County received a call to check on some young cotton in the south end of the county for insect damage and stand counts for possible disease due to heavy early rains. Upon arrival, the county agent started to assess damage to the field and discovered something unexpected. At first he didn't believe what he had seen due to how young the cotton was, but he confirmed with Extension Specialist Bob Kemerait that the cotton had bacterial blight. This is the earliest bacterial blight has been found on cotton in the area. The potential for yield loss was unknown. The county agent collaborated with the farmer to set up three test plots in the three fields where the bacterial blight was found to get yield-loss estimates. In the end, the three fields averaged 316 pounds per acre lost. Unfortunately, there is no known control or cure for bacterial blight in cotton once it is found in the field. What we know now is that there is a greater chance for yield loss when bacterial blight is found on cotton that has six to eight leaves than when it is found later in the season. The only thing that can be done is to plant a variety of cotton that is resistant to bacterial blight.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The Marion County 4-H Club helps young people and adult volunteers find a supportive environment where they can learn together and be challenged to reach their full potential. In a cooperative effort with Marion County Schools, 140 students in Marion County participate in monthly in-school educational programs that cover subjects such as forestry, wildlife, agriculture and healthy lifestyles.

Marion County 4-H also offers after-school programs including workshops for 4-H’ers involved in District Project Achievement, summer camps, day camps and a new club called “Hunter Gatherers,” which teaches 4-H’ers the basics of survival and self-reliance while in the outdoors. In 2018, Marion County raised $2,000 dollars, which made it possible to send 4-H’ers to summer camps and District Project Achievement, allowing 4-H’ers to expand their horizons.

4-H’ers perform community-service projects such as trash pickup and rabies clinics either as requirements for or enhancements to their project work. In turn, the community gains a generation of young people who care about where they live and are willing to make a difference in their community.
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-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.