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

Agriculture is much more than farming, and McDuffie County is a prime example of agricultural diversity. Its two major nurseries and forestry and livestock enterprises comprise the majority of the outputs, yet there is more diversity than those operations represent. Small, part-time operations, gardens and lawns all contribute to the agricultural makeup of our county. In 2018, working to help residents was a primary focus for the McDuffie County Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) program. Starting in early February, a seven-week gardening program explored a variety of topics facing homeowners. Classes included soils and soil testing, proper fertilization, weed identification and control, plus choosing the right plant for the right location. Participants gained knowledge about their landscape and gardens that allowed them to make sound decisions while working on their property. A follow-up program dealt with lawn care and the steps participants needed to follow for a better lawn next year. Proper application and spreader calibration were a focus of that training. Small livestock operations are scattered around McDuffie and surrounding counties, many of which are goat operations. In cooperation with Warren and Wilkes county offices, a goat program was offered to producers. This three-session training included an assortment of topics, including goat nutrition and health, pasture and hay management, animal selection, equipment and housing. Attendees were trained and certified in FAMACHA (FAffa MAlan CHArt), a training to help identify levels of internal parasites in small ruminants. This will help producers evaluate animals and make sound decisions on using dewormers.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

McDuffie County 4-H’ers develop skills that are valuable not only to the community, but also to the youths as they grow into successful adults. Approximately 700 students in grades four through 12 are enrolled in McDuffie County 4-H. Through a partnership with local schools, UGA Extension in McDuffie County conducts 25 monthly in-school educational programs encouraging fifth- and sixth-grade students to develop leadership, communication skills and self-confidence. In addition to in-school programming, McDuffie County 4-H hosts a Project SAFE (Shooting Awareness, Fun and Education) BB team, a consumer judging team and a poultry judging team. McDuffie County 4-H is also well-represented at Cloverleaf Project Achievement, Junior/ Senior Project Achievement and summer camp. With help from ANR and Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) agents, McDuffie County 4-H hosted Food Week, a summer day camp that provided information on nutrition and healthy food choices, smart decisions at the grocery store and hands-on healthy food preparation and preservation methods.

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

Information on food safety, food preservation, mold and mildew, healthy meal planning, nutrition and family budgeting is provided to McDuffie County residents through local newspaper articles, newsletter distribution, presentations and by answering phone inquiries. McDuffie County FACS was able to offer two Cooking for a Lifetime Cancer Prevention Cooking Schools in partnership with the American Cancer Society and the McDuffie County Health Department. These cooking schools, designed to reach out to citizens who are rarely or never screened for breast, cervical or colorectal cancer, inform participants of the recommended screening guidelines and encourage individuals to be screened. Twenty-four participants attended the schools and were shown ways to reduce their risk of certain cancers through healthy food selection and preparation.
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.