AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The Oconee County Extension agent and the program development team members identified issues that needed to be addressed to help local farmers with their profitability and sustainability for production agriculture. Currently, the farm-gate value for Oconee County has an economic output of $60 million for commodities such as poultry, ornamental horticulture, forages and livestock. A highlight for agricultural programming for local farmers was beef cattle education with an emphasis on managing forages — summer and winter annuals, baleage harvesting, and rotational grazing strategies and the beginning farmer program with an emphasis on business management and small ruminant education. Furthermore, agricultural awareness education (e.g., third-grade Agriculture Day, livestock shows) is a priority to help the local community to understand that local farmers provide quality food and fiber to our area, state and nation.

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCE

A change in policy in October 2015, called the Standard Medical Deduction or SMED, means that there are more food stamps available to seniors (60 years and older) and people who get Social Security disability or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability benefits. UGA Extension in Oconee County educates seniors about the new policy and assists with the application process. The American Community Survey provides the characteristics of participants from Georgia’s Congressional District 10, which includes Morgan and Oconee counties, who qualified for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits between 2011 and 2013. The survey indicates that 25.6 percent of households with one or more people 60 years and over received SNAP benefits while 31.5 percent did not. Seventy-two seniors in Morgan and Oconee counties were educated about the new SMED program through UGA Extension Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) programs. To date, 10 seniors have been assisted with completing the Senior SNAP application. Eight of the 10 seniors began receiving or increased their benefits. Actual benefits increased by $6,888. Moody’s Analytics estimates that in a weak economy, $1 in SNAP benefits generates $1.70 in economic activity. Therefore, these benefits could equate to $11,709.60 returning to local economies.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The mission of Georgia 4-H and the Oconee County 4-H Club is to assist youth in acquiring knowledge, developing life skills, and forming attitudes that will enable them to become self-directing, productive and contributing members of society. In 2018, more than 900 youth were impacted by Oconee County 4-H through hands-on learning focused on agricultural and environmental issues, agriculture awareness, leadership, communication skills, foods and nutrition, health, and citizenship. Over the course of the year, nearly 6,000 contacts were made in 284 educational programs for youth. On the district and state levels, 401 youth competed in Project Achievement. Oconee County 4-H Club participated in Project SAFE (Shooting Awareness, Fun and Education) BB and shotgun clubs, judging events and quiz bowls, and these activities were responsible for over 72 contacts and state team winners. Oconee County was recognized by the Northeast District for the largest State Congress delegation and for the largest number of winners at State Congress. Two hundred eighty-five youth attended 4-H summer camp. Volunteers donated 2546 hours of service to a variety of Oconee County 4-H activities and events. When considering the value of volunteerism from www.independentsector.org (indicating $23.26/hour), the value of these volunteers was $59,219.96 to our community this past year. Over 8,000 hours of community service were carried out through the community by Oconee County 4-H members.

ugaextension.org/oconee
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.