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

For the past six years, the Oglethorpe County 4-H Club has seen an explosion in the number of youths participating in 4-H summer camping programs. Every summer, Oglethorpe County 4-H takes approximately 50 fourth-, fifth- and sixth-graders to Cloverleaf Camp, 15 seventh- and eighth-graders to Junior Camp, and three ninth- through 12th-graders to Senior Camp. Oglethorpe County 4-H takes pride in enabling every child who wants to attend camp to do so. In 2018, community members and businesses came together and donated funds to award 20 youths full or partial summer camp scholarships.

So, why all the success? 4-H’ers know that summer camp is fun, but it is also educational. Additionally, parents are being informed of the importance of summer camping experiences for their children, not only for the fun but also for the educational aspects of camp. Youths learn and foster many life skills during their week of camp, such as independence, respect for others, self-confidence, cleanliness, teamwork and resiliency. The success of the Oglethorpe County 4-H summer camping program improves the 4-H program as a whole and helps Oglethorpe County youth become more well-rounded individuals.

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

Being an active member of the community includes visiting the county senior center. The Oglethorpe County Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) agent visited the Oglethorpe County Senior Center in July, August and September to lead a group of seniors in nutrition lessons including the “Importance of Water Consumption,” “Adding Fruits and Vegetables to Your Diet” and “Improving Daily Exercise and Stretching.”

Professional development opportunities and trainings were a large part of the early months for the new FACS agent. Professional memberships are also an important part of the development of quality Oglethorpe County FACS programming. In November, the Oglethorpe FACS agent helped other Northeast District FACS agents in Madison, Georgia, plan the 2018 statewide Georgia Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (GEAFCS) Conference in the Northeast District. Oglethorpe County FACS attended the National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences and GEAFCS professional development opportunities.

On December 8, 10 early-learning center providers attended a two-hour training on how to improve the quality of their nutrition and physical activity programs.

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), which is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers in order to address natural resource concerns. In order to be approved for funds through EQIP, a Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) is required with the application.

Four Oglethorpe County poultry producers applied for EQIP funds without the required NMP. As the deadline to apply for EQIP was quickly approaching, the four producers came to the Oglethorpe (Agriculture and Natural Resources) ANR agent for assistance in developing the required plans. NMPs require plan writers to be certified. In an effort to improve the odds of EQIP funds being awarded to these producers in Oglethorpe County, the ANR agent, who is a certified Nutrient Management Plan writer, agreed to fast-track the writing of the plans.

As a result of the assistance provided by the Oglethorpe County ANR agent, each producer saved the $2,000 that a private consultant charges to write NMPs, for a total of $8,000 saved. In addition, $230,000 in EQIP assistance was awarded to these four poultry producers that would not have been awarded without the required NMP.
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.