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**

UGA Extension in Pickens County welcomed Christina Garner in May as an agent for the 4-H Youth Development and Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) program areas. Garner hit the ground running with a trip to 4-H summer camp at Jekyll Island in June 2018. Twenty-five fifth- and sixth-grade 4-H’ers, two teen leaders, one adult volunteer and Pickens County Extension Program Assistant Elizabeth Adams were all able to enjoy a week on the coast of Georgia. The group was able to explore beach ecology, dive into the ocean, and enjoy hiking, biking and canoeing. We concluded the summer with Adams celebrating her one-year anniversary with Pickens County.

The Pickens County 4-H Club is very fortunate to be present in the Pickens County School System. In-school club meetings are offered on a monthly basis to fifth- through eighth-grade students. Club meetings offer the opportunity to showcase after-school activities and extended education through experimental activities in science, engineering and technology, and agricultural curriculum. Cloverbud (kindergarten through fourth-grade) 4-H’ers are already working hard toward gaining leadership and public speaking skills by participating in monthly meetings. Our senior (ninth- through 12th-grade) members wrapped up the year by submitting portfolios for District Project Achievement (DPA) that highlight their year of activities, community service and accomplishments.

In addition to in-school meetings, DPA and summer camp, Pickens County 4-H offers a variety of other activities. These activities include a Cotton Boll and Consumer Judging Team, Poultry Judging Team, Modified Trap Shotgun Team, BB Team, Horse Club, leadership conferences, summer activities, community service opportunities and horse and livestock shows. By participating in various activities, 4-H’ers are learning skills to prepare them for a productive future. The 4-H agent has strong goals to continue to build the club’s capacity through fund development and volunteer support throughout the next few years.

**AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

The Pickens County Master Gardener Extension Volunteers (MGEVs) have continued to make a lasting impact in the community. Master Gardeners have repeatedly volunteered their time with the local Habitat for Humanity organization over the years, and this year was no exception. Upon the completion of a local home, the Master Gardeners donated plants and landscaped the new home for the lucky family. Their knowledge and skills with plants ensured that the correct plants were selected, and we hope the family can enjoy their new landscape for years to come.

A group of MGEVs implemented the Master Gardener Sprouts program at a local school. This volunteer group meets monthly with a class of elementary school children to create hands-on learning experiences about gardening – no garden necessary. When the school principal saw how much the children enjoyed the program, he allowed the MGEVs to use a small greenhouse located at the school. All MGEVs and some 4-H programs are supported by proceeds from the annual Pickens County MGEV/4-H Plant Sale. Pickens County MGEVs have a passion for volunteering, and that passion does not stop with gardening. Last summer, the Pickens County Extension office allowed MUST Ministries to use a portion of their office as a Summer Lunch Program space where volunteers made sack lunches for students in the community whose families could not afford meals. 4-H’ers and MGEVs saw this great need and volunteered their time outside of the Extension program.
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.