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.

AGRICULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to plan and implement conservation practices that improve the conservation of natural resources on agricultural land. At the request of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) soil conservation technician, EQIP applicants made appointments to meet with Ricky Ensley, Polk County’s UGA Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) agent, to identify their target weeds and method of control.

Ensley met with seven Polk County landowners on site to discuss integrated pest management strategies to help them decide the best course of action for weed management in their pastures and hay fields. These landowners represent 200 acres of forage. These landowners made applications for EQIP funding.

Sheri Teems, NRCS district supervisor, states that the majority of our EQIP grazing contracts include herbaceous weed-control practices as a way of improving forage production. Since participants are receiving $30-40 an acre for this practice, we are trying to get them to go above and beyond what they usually do when they spray their pastures. We are requiring them to consult with UGA Extension to get site-specific recommendations before they spray. After following recommendations made by Extension, these seven producers qualified for EQIP funds. Those seven producers made informed weed-management decisions for 200 acres of forage crops. Those 200 acres of forage crops yield an average of 2.7 tons per acre of forage, valued at $54,000.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

There are 785 youth enrolled in the Polk County 4-H Club. Our 4-H staff conducted 25 monthly meetings focusing on agriscience and healthy living. Polk County 4-H’ers performed 454 hours of service in the Polk County community. Polk County volunteers donated 794 hours valued at $13,188. Polk County 4-H’ers competed in District Project Achievement, which encourages youth to present demonstrations to a group of their peers and judges. They also complete a portfolio, much like a resume. Participating in the competition helps them to develop research, writing and presentation skills that also aid them in performing better on school-related tasks and tests, and becoming work-ready young adults. Polk County had 45 4-H’ers compete at District Project Achievement. One 4-H’er, Zoey Myrick, competed at State Congress, placing second.

Twenty-four 4-H’ers increased their knowledge and developed critical thinking and oral presentation skills by participating on Cotton Boll and Consumer Judging and Poultry Judging teams.

The shooting sports program, known as Project S.A.F.E. (Shooting Awareness, Fun and Education) allows 4-H youth the experience of solving problems and meeting challenges that develop their self-confidence. The Polk County BB Gun Team had 15 members compete at the state contest.

Twenty-two sophomores from Cedartown and Rockmart high schools participated in Polk County’s Polk Youth Leadership program. They attended four leadership sessions.

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

Polk County Extension hosted a Cooking for a Lifetime Cancer Prevention Cooking School. Twenty-two attendees learned about reducing the risk of cancer by proper nutrition. A diabetes class was held in October with 25 participants learning about nutritional diets for patients with diabetes.
COUNTY AT A GLANCE

Population: 42,378
2017 Georgia County Guide, Georgia Public Library Service

Georgia Health Factors Ranking: 84/1159
2016 County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Georgia 4-H Enrollment: 813
Georgia 4-H enrollment system, FY17

Agriculture, Food, Fiber, Horticulture and Related Total Economic Contribution:
Jobs: 2,047
Output: $292,019,350
2019 Ag Snapshots, UGA Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development

Farm Gate Value: $2,672,856
Top Commodities: Poultry (broilers), Hay, Beef (cattle)
2017 Georgia Farm Gate Value Report, UGA Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

was founded in 1914 by the federal Smith–Lever Act. It’s a unique partnership between UGA, county governments and the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Cooperative Extension System of land-grant universities. Today, UGA Extension serves more than 2.1 million Georgians annually through a network of specialists, agents and staff who provide unbiased, research-based information driven by local needs and clientele input. From publications to in-person workshops and events, UGA Extension is ready to meet the needs of the state and its communities.

Learn more at: extension.uga.edu

2018 ANNUAL REPORT: POLK COUNTY

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.

ugaextension.org/polk