AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The UGA Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) program in Rabun County had another busy and productive year in 2018. ANR Agent John Scaduto reestablished the Northeast Georgia Vegetable Production Seminar, which was a long-standing production meeting held annually in Rabun County. The response from local producers was overwhelmingly positive. With more than 75 growers and UGA Northeast District Extension agents in attendance, four doctorate-level vegetable production specialists from around the state offered cutting-edge information on all aspects of vegetable production. The seminar will be offered in March 2019 and will once again become a signature annual program for UGA Extension in Rabun County.

As a member of the UGA Viticulture Team, Scaduto continued his participation in local and regional viticulture research projects to assist northeast Georgia vineyards in maximizing quality and production, enhancing their ability to produce award-winning wines and, in turn, helping to attract more agritourism to the county.

Scaduto offered educational programming in the areas of small-farm business planning, forestry resource management, the safe and effective use of pesticides, home gardening and fruit production, and the important role of beneficial insects in the environment.

In collaboration with Northeast District Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) agents and the Rabun County Food Bank Teaching Kitchen, Rabun County Extension was able to offer cancer-prevention and diabetes cooking schools to assist local residents incorporate healthful living techniques in their daily lives.

More than 500 no-fee consultations were conducted in 2018 and almost 200 diagnostic samples on water, soil, disease, and agricultural and residential pests were performed.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

4-H Extension Associate Donna Young meets monthly with nine fifth-grade classes, seven sixth-grade classes, one junior (seventh- and eighth-grade) class with 27 students, and one senior club (ninth- through 12th-grade) with 18 students, all during school time. She conducts several after-school classes and workshops. Rabun County 4-H took 37 4-H’ers to Jekyll Island for summer camp.

The Rabun County 4-H Club was very successful at District Project Achievement (DPA) in 2018. We had three seniors place first and advance to the state competition. Huck Smith competed in crafts, Guy Gober in entomology and Sage Shirley in environmental science. Sage placed second at state. Both Huck and Guy earned Master status by placing first in their respective categories. Huck became Rabun County’s first Double Master. He had previously mastered in the science of engineering and mechanics last year. He is one of only two in the state to earn Double Master status. They both attended National Congress in late November.

On November 17, Cloverleaf DPA participants traveled to Union County for the competition. Rabun County received plaques for the highest percent of winners and the largest increase in participation from Northeast District. Rabun County had one student place third, seven place second and the remainder placing first.

Rabun County won plaques for:
• Largest percentage of winners, Cloverleaf DPA 2018
• Largest increase of participation, DPA 2018
• Highest percentage of first-place winners, Junior/Senior DPA 2018
• Largest number of first-place winners, State Congress 2018
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.