FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

UGA Extension in Rockdale County has an overarching goal to make healthy eating fun and reduce health conditions in the community. At the Taste of Conyers festival, 600 individuals enjoyed a rainbow vegetable wrap, which received rave reviews — 97 percent of people said that they loved it or liked it. Rockdale County Extension was recognized for best appetizer at the festival from the Atlanta Food and Lifestyle Bloggers' Society. The keystone Fun for Families (FFF) program addressed picky eating in a six-week series of 20-minute, interactive, rainbow-themed food “commercials.” More than 650 children and parents attended FFF in 2018. The weekly average attendance doubled from 55 participants in 2017 to 110 participants in 2018. Week-to-week retention was high, as 50 children attended more than 50 percent of the sessions. Comment cards from parents showed that 83 percent of adults learned something new each week and 78 percent of adults intended to try something they saw at FFF at home. The Rockdale County Extension office also hosted the inaugural Rainbow Party nutrition festival with cooking demos, community organizations and interactive carnival games that taught healthy eating principles to 200 attendees. Thanks to grant support from the Hospital Authority of Rockdale County, the Extension office gave $1,000 worth of produce to families. One parent said, “I told others how much fun my daughter had at the events and how excited my daughter was at home afterwards. She wanted to help to make the foods and snacks we learned about each week. Very helpful with a picky snack eater.”

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

In Rockdale County, many teachers split their science time with social studies, limiting science teaching time. The Rockdale County Extension agent and 4-H staff have implemented a science curriculum to teach during their traditional 4-H in-school programs. During the 2017-18 school year, the Rockdale County 4-H Club implemented and adapted new science lessons into their yearly curriculum to incorporate the Georgia Standards and encourage critical thinking and individual discovery through learning by doing. Rockdale County also offered multiple “Science Resource Guide” classes outside of the traditional classroom setting. The Rockdale County Extension 4-H staff taught a total of 336 science lessons during the traditional 4-H in-school program, reaching about 820 students a month. Teachers have said that these programs and lessons “add value to our classrooms as they are reinforcing the science standards we are already teaching” and “bring an exciting new aspect to teaching the standards to our classroom.”

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Rockdale County Master Gardener Extension Volunteers (MGEVs) have continued their mission of service and education in 2018. Of the many projects currently in progress here in the county, the Plant-a-Row Vegetable Garden is perhaps the most prominent. In 2018, the garden produced more than 2,000 pounds of fresh produce for Rockdale Emergency Relief (RER). In addition to providing produce, the space also served as an outdoor classroom for educational demonstrations on gardening and pollinator-friendly practices. Other projects include maintaining the Memorial Arboretum located on the grounds of the International Horse Park, planting ornamentals at the Nancy Guinn Memorial Library, and providing educational booths at festivals and plant sales throughout the year. All told, MGEVs contributed nearly 2,600 hours for a value of almost $60,000 in 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.