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.

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Approximately 840 students and teachers from 42 first-grade classes attended Spalding County Farm Day. A collaborative effort between UGA Extension in Spalding County, Griffin Spalding County Schools, Farm Bureau and the UGA Griffin campus, the Spalding County Farm Day helps children understand the connection between farms and the food they eat. Bledsoe Farm, a 204-acre UGA-Griffin research facility, hosted the event. During their visit, the children rotated through eight stations featuring beef and dairy cows, horses, chickens, honeybees, forestry management, vegetable production, weather station management, and food safety. Students had the opportunity to see, hear, touch and ask questions. One of Spalding County Farm Day’s highlights (besides the ice cream) was the tram ride through the row crop fields where students saw corn, soybeans, sorghum and millet growing. UGA Extension agents, Spalding County Master Gardener Extension Volunteers, UGA-Griffin specialists and personnel, 4-H’ers, local farmers, and Farm Bureau staff all worked together to make this event a successful educational experience.

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

The Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) staff collaborated with Spalding County Parks and Recreation to present Foods of the Month lessons to 231 lower- and upper-elementary youths at four Summer Food Service program sites during the summer break. The Foods of the Month curriculum is part of a National Parks and Recreation initiative to promote healthier out-of-school meals and increasing physical activity for youths. Each lesson included interactive games, crafts and food tastings that focused on seasonal fruits and vegetables.

In addition to serving Spalding County youths, Spalding County Extension offered estate planning workshops specifically for senior audiences. There were workshops at three senior adult locations as well as the public library. More than 70 individuals attended the workshops, which focused on drafting a will and completing Georgia Advance Directive for Health Care and Financial Power of Attorney forms. After attending the program, most participants indicated that they planned to complete all three forms.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The mission of the Spalding County 4-H Club is to assist youth in acquiring knowledge, developing life skills and forming attitudes that will enable them to become self-directing, productive and contributing members of society. This is accomplished through hands-on learning experiences. Beginning in the fifth grade, 4-H members are taught public speaking skills. Working in partnership with teachers and counselors, 4-H focuses on teaching public speaking skills to all fifth-graders throughout the school year. Spalding County 4-H took more than 100 4-H’ers to District Project Achievement, and 85 percent of students presenting demonstrations placed first, second or third.

4-H offers a variety of opportunities covering a range of interests, and the 4-H approach of “Learn by Doing” serves 4-H’ers as well as they explore those interests. Spalding 4-H offers students opportunities to highlight their talents on many levels. A Spalding 4-H’er won first place in the Georgia 4-H Foundation holiday card contest and the foundation featured her original artwork on their holiday card. A Spalding 4-H’er was selected as a vocalist for the highly competitive Clovers and Company performing arts group. 4-H is a well-rounded program that calls all youth to “Make the Best Better.”
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.