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.

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

Barbara Twilley was hired as the Taliaferro Extension educator in 2016, supported by an initiative of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to help reduce obesity in high-obesity areas. Thanks to the generous support of the Taliaferro County Commission, UGA Extension in Taliaferro County has been able to reopen an office in Crawfordville, Georgia, and bring new services to the community that will help improve the quality of life for all citizens.

Community members meet regularly to choose and support the environmental changes most appropriate for Taliaferro County to improve access and opportunities for physical activity and healthy food options.

Nutrition education and chronic-disease prevention programming, provided by Wilkes County Expanded Foods and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) Assistant Linda Beasley and Elbert County Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) Agent Christa Campbell, is being offered in partnership with community churches, Taliaferro County Schools and the Taliaferro County Senior Center to help adults learn the importance of food selection and healthy preparation in reducing the risk of obesity and chronic disease while best utilizing food dollars and resources.

Coalition members led a walking challenge, with 21 participants logging more than 2,200 miles in just eight weeks. Weekly yoga and senior stretch programs are being led at the senior center, providing new opportunities to help all community members stay active.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

In-school 4-H youth programming through Taliaferro County Schools is in its third year, supported by collaborative efforts between Northeast District Extension, Wilkes County Extension, Georgia 4-H and Rock Eagle 4-H Center. Five in-school 4-H clubs, reaching all 68 youth in fourth through 12th grades meet each month under the leadership of Rock Eagle 4-H Center Program Specialist Jessica Torhan and Wilkes County 4-H Community Service Specialist Kassandra Swiney, who share the importance of agriculture, water conservation and nutrition with students.

Highlights for the year included an in-school Project Achievement contest for all middle-school students and a healthy living/environmental education overnight trip to Rock Eagle 4-H Center with more than 40 middle-school youths. Taliaferro County was represented for the first time at summer camp with four seventh-graders attending Junior Camp at Camp Fortson.

Elbert County Extension Agent Patrick Marcellino developed a master plan for creating a school garden and learning area. Over the next year, the coalition hopes to break ground in this area, creating a farm-to-table learning environment that will teach youth about food production, improve access to healthy food and build entrepreneurial skills.

AGRICULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Greene County Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) Agent David Daniel and a team of UGA Extension specialists, Center for Urban Agriculture professionals and county agents from Athens-Clarke, Columbia and Augusta-Richmond counties provided agricultural education through the Master Gardener Extension Volunteer (MGEV) program. Five local community members completed the MGEV certification and have contributed more than 250 hours of volunteer service.

UGA Extension partnered with the Georgia Farmers Market Association and Wholesome Wave to expand food access in Taliaferro County, establishing the state’s first Fresh Stop Market. This effort, supported by more than 675 hours of volunteer support, generated additional revenue for 13 local farmers and provided 1,262 pounds of locally grown produce through a combination community-supported agriculture and farmers market model for all community members, targeting those with the most limited access to fresh produce. A community garden has also been established in Sharon, Georgia, providing fresh produce to any person who wants to help plant and harvest.
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.