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.

**4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**

There is a growing disconnect between youth and healthy food. Many children no longer recognize common, fresh foods. As a result, in 2015, the Towns County 4-H Club collaborated with Master Gardener Extension Volunteers to develop a new and exciting 4-H Garden Club. Towns County 4-H Garden Club projects include digging in the dirt, making stuff grow and engaging in crafty, practical activities that kids love. 4-H’ers now have the valuable opportunity to experience growing seeds into plants and food.

The Towns County 4-H Saddle-Up Club continues to offer 4-H’ers the opportunity to learn about different breeds, characteristics and habits of horses. Towns County 4-H Saddle-Up Club members will learn about establishing safe practices, saddling and bridling horses, providing hoof care, maintaining horse health, and ensuring proper feeding. Students also are given instruction on proper haltering, handling and riding of horses.

In the 4-H Project SAFE (Shooting Awareness, Fun and Education) program, 4-H’ers learn safe and responsible use of shooting equipment. Shooting sports teams aim to strengthen families by encouraging them to participate together in lifelong recreational activities. Without fail, the Towns County 4-H BB Team attracts eager students in the fourth through eighth grades. In the process of learning marksmanship skills, 4-H members will also develop leadership abilities and attributes to become better citizens of tomorrow.

**AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

Towns County maintained its traditional corn and vegetable production meetings in 2018. These meetings help to equip farmers for the upcoming season with the most current information in corn and vegetable production. UGA Extension in Towns County also uses these meetings as an opportunity for local farmers to earn pesticide credits, which are essential for many farmers to continue operations. Farmers were educated on proper pesticide usage and new products that are available. Extension promoted soil testing for farmers to get the most out of their crops. With the heavy clay soils we have in the mountains, it is important that farmers utilize proper soil management and pesticide usage to have the highest return possible. Farmers were also taught about the effects that nematodes can have on their crops and the new pesticides that can be used to control them.

Towns County Extension maintains strong relationships with local community partners including the Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center, Chestatee-Chattahoochee Resource Conservation and Development Council, Blue Ridge Mountain Conservation District, Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Young Farmers program. Towns County Extension worked alongside these entities to provide more comprehensive programming for residents of Towns County. The year 2018 was the inaugural year of the wild-hog trapping program managed by Towns County Extension in coordination with the Young Farmers and Blue Ridge Mountain Conservation District. We are looking forward to the growth of this program as we work to reduce the damage that wild hogs have on farmers’ and homeowners’ land.

[ugaextension.org/towns](http://ugaextension.org/towns)
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 FRIDE, 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.