The high-school graduation rate for Turner County is 78 percent. The College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) is an accountability measure that promotes college and career readiness for all Georgia public school students. According to the Tufts 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development, the structured learning, encouragement and adult mentoring that young people receive through 4-H participation plays a vital role in helping them achieve future life successes. Young people involved in 4-H report better grades and an elevated level of school engagement, and they are nearly two times more likely to go to college. 4-H youth are 3.4 times more likely to actively contribute to their communities when compared to their peers.

Under the leadership of Lynn Davis, Turner County 4-H agent, approximately 70 youth practiced their leadership skills and worked together to achieve a common goal of reaching over 400 youth through the National Education Association’s Read Across America.

Turner County 4-H’ers proved they knew a thing or two about reading as they promoted literacy for children of all ages. These teens practiced leadership, citizenship and life skills. Through community engagement, Lynn is helping to build social capital where it may not be expected. Youth-adult partnerships provide natural mentorship opportunities and community connectedness.

Immediately following the reading event, students shared that they felt important and that they would be successful in life. Kenvus H. believed the project made him “become a better reader because he gained public speaking skills to help make (his) career successful.” One teacher commented, “This experience gives the middle-school students confidence in themselves, as they are the ‘role models’ or ‘big kids.’ This experience gives the elementary-school students someone to look up to and imagine that one day, they can grow up to come back and read to younger students themselves.”

Leadership skills ranked second as the greatest skill deficit behind communication in a recent survey of major employers. Today’s youth have few opportunities to learn the leadership skills so valued in the workplace and our society.

Each year, Turner County Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) conducts farm visits to examine cotton-crop maturity and determine the optimal defoliation date for each crop. Many growers attend to peanuts first and let cotton wait; however, these visits encourage timely defoliation, which can lead to increased yield and quality. This year, Turner County ANR Agent Will Gay conducted these cotton defoliation consultations on more than 70 site visits. This has significant impact, especially on a year like 2018 when the county was hit by Hurricane Michael. After the hurricane hit, Gay documented yield loss throughout the county, information that was extremely useful later when the Georgia Development Authority offered low-interest disaster loans to farmers within the disaster zone. Gay filled out many loss-verification forms needed for submitting loan applications. Field research was conducted on cotton, peanut and watermelon crops in 2018, however, some of the most important work was to follow up on the whitefly epidemic of 2017 so that growers would know what to expect. Gay was involved with specialists on projects that screened winter weeds for viruses and identified possible host plants for whiteflies. In 2018, whiteflies were present in cotton as early as July, and Gay assisted growers in the management of whitefly populations.
### COUNTY AT A GLANCE

**Population:** 7,747  
2017 Georgia County Guide, Georgia Public Library Service

**Georgia Health Factors Ranking:** 143/159  
2016 County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

**Georgia 4-H Enrollment:** 533  
Georgia 4-H enrollment system, FY17

**Agriculture, Food, Fiber, Horticulture and Related Total Economic Contribution:**  
- **Jobs:** 1,246  
- **Output:** $167,359,628  
  2019 Ag Snapshots, UGA Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development

**Farm Gate Value:** $100,655,640  
2017 Georgia Farm Gate Value Report, UGA Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development

**Top Commodities:** Poultry (broilers), Cotton, Watermelon

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### 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.

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[Learn more at: extension.uga.edu](http://extension.uga.edu)