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**

In 2018, the Union County 4-H Club partnered with the Chestatee-Chattahoochee Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council and Union County Farmers Market to promote the Giant Pumpkin Contest sponsored by Georgia 4-H and the Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association. With the guidance of volunteer leaders, students were provided seeds from giant Atlantic pumpkins and season-long consultation advice on planting, cultivating and caring for their pumpkins throughout the growing season. A record book was created and a schedule of educational meetings was established to help guide students through this hands-on learning experience. Lessons included soil testing, understanding nutritional requirements for giant pumpkins, seed preparation and planting. Two weeks after planting their seeds, the seedlings were transplanted on land provided by Union County near the farmers market. Students were encouraged to meet weekly at the pumpkin patch to weed, water, fertilize, check for disease and monitor for insect population. During these meetings, 4-H students were educated on a disease-control spray schedule, weekly fertilization and insecticide use. During the growing season, several pumpkin plants were in danger of not surviving because of a wet summer and disease pressure. In late September, a Giant Pumpkin Growing Contest was held at the Union County Farmers Market. Pumpkins were weighed and displayed for the public. Ribbons and prize money were given to the students for the largest and prettiest pumpkin, along with winning record books. Winners at the local contest were entered in the Georgia 4-H Pumpkin Contest. This year, all eight Union County 4-H pumpkins finished among the top 10 pumpkins in the state. The top two largest pumpkins from Union County won first and third in the state overall. The largest went on to compete at a National Giant Pumpkin Event in Kentucky, winning second place in the Youth Division.

**AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

UGA Extension in Union 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. Union County Extension 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 to farmers for them to get the most out of their crops. With the heavy clay soils that 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 new pesticides that can be used to control them. Union County Extension maintains strong relationships with local community partners including the Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center, Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D, Blue Ridge Mountain Conservation District, Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Young Farmers program. Union County Extension worked alongside these entities to provide more comprehensive programming for residents of Union County. The year 2018 was the inaugural year of the wild-hog trapping program that is managed by Union 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/union
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.