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

UGA Extension in Upson County gained a new Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) agent in March 2018. This change brought new programs to the area and the Extension office hosted several workshops for surrounding counties. These workshops allowed participants to earn credit hours for their private and commercial pesticide licenses and to gain the knowledge needed to identify problems and implement solutions on their farms.

Along with producer programs, the Upson County Extension office implemented a new program called “Extension Holiday DIY,” which allowed community members to get hands-on and creative with everyday items. We offered three of these programs in 2018 and will offer four in 2019.

As usual, the Southeastern Hay Contest was a success. More than 60 samples from Lamar and Upson counties were entered, with two placing in the top five in their respective categories. This year, the county experienced excess rainfall that may affect the quality of harvest for the next year or so, but we were lucky to not have the magnitude of devastation experienced by counties to the south. Our thoughts go out to those individuals.

The most successful program of the year was our August Hay Day hosted at County Line Farms. More than 100 individuals attended. The one-day event kicked off with presentations from three agricultural specialists and concluded with hay-field equipment demonstrations and agricultural sponsors. All in all, it was a successful year — now on to the next one.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Approximately 600 youth participated in our fun, hands-on career awareness lessons at Upson Lee Elementary School (ULES) in 2018. Lessons included making chocolates in a manufacturing production line, designing and constructing Lego houses, playing a saving/spending game, and taking a virtual tour of Upson County to learn about local government services. ULES students reported looking forward to 4-H lessons and 4-H staff have received very positive feedback from teachers.

In addition to successful in-school programming, our after-school programs are thriving. After-school programs boasted a 250 percent increase in enrollment in 2018 as we added new programs and increased the capacity for existing ones. Our after-school programs now include a new Makerspace program for primary- and elementary-school students, expanded middle-school and high-school clubs, and a newly established 4-H County Council.

The Makerspace program provides hands-on, creative ways to encourage students to design, build and invent as they engage in science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM). The most popular activities at Makerspace are building Lego creations, making slime and doing computer-coding challenges.

Our middle- and high-school students have been learning about manners and etiquette at their monthly Upson County 4-H Club meetings. Topics include meeting and greeting, writing thank you notes, and dining etiquette. The Manners Worth Millions program will culminate with a formal dinner.

County Council is the youth-led decision-making body of Upson County 4-H. County council members plan our recreational events including field trips, parties and movie nights. County council members also plan our service projects and fundraisers. Through County Council participation, youth learn self-determination, leadership and civic responsibility.

We owe much of the success in 2018 to our dedicated 4-H volunteers and staff. We have a team of 15 volunteers who lead clubs and support our programs.
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.