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

Making up the largest land area in Georgia, Ware County has a diverse agricultural community able to successfully cultivate many agricultural commodities. The county’s farm-gate value totals nearly $60 million, with blueberries and forest products as its two largest commodities. Superior research and education is the driving force of innovation, and no one knows this better than UGA Extension. Ware County is currently experiencing a vacancy in agricultural programming. Filling this vacancy is a must as Agricultural and Natural Resources (ANR) is an ever-changing field. Therefore, in order for producers to maintain a high level of progression, delivering unbiased education is essential. In addition, decreases in commodity prices have only served to emphasize the importance of Extension programming, which is critical to aiding farmers with day-to-day decisions. The new ANR professional will address these issues as well as pasture management, small fruit production, storm water drainage and leadership development. In order to better serve Ware County, forestry and wildlife will also become areas of focus.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Youth who participate in 4-H develop skill sets that allow them to grow into successful adults, which benefits the greater community. The Ware County 4-H Club provides a positive environment that enables 4-H’ers to develop these skills through the essential elements of independence, generosity, belonging and mastery. There are more than 1,000 students in fourth through 12th grades enrolled in the Ware County 4-H program. Through a partnership with the Ware County School District and the Ware County Board of Education, UGA Extension conducts approximately 40 monthly in-school educational programs to encourage fourth-through sixth-grade students to develop leadership, citizenship and communication skills. In addition to in-school programming, Ware County 4-H hosts a specialty precision air-rifle team that competes in various 4-H competitions around the state. The Ware County 4-H program also hosts a book club and garden club that promotes farm-to-fork practices. Ware County 4-H is represented at numerous 4-H events such as Cloverleaf and Junior/Senior District Project Achievement, Cotton Boll and Consumer Judging, Poultry Judging, summer camp and livestock shows.

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

Ware County Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) Extension serves workers, consumers and families in meeting their basic and most important needs with a wide body of research-based knowledge about topics that affect their lives, including family, food, health, money and home. In fall 2018, Ware County Extension hired a new FACS agent who spent the remainder of the year establishing a community presence through various events, sharing information on timely topics with regular newspaper articles and social media postings, and educating youth on healthy relationship practices. Ware County FACS also partnered with the Exchange Club of Waycross, Georgia, to facilitate the annual homemakers exhibit at the Okefenokee Agricultural Fair to showcase local talent to the community. Ware County FACS has a long tradition of helping individuals and families and strengthening the community through educational programs.

ugaextension.org/ware
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 P-RIDE, 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.