

EXTENSION TRENDS: **TWIN FALLS COUNTY**

University of Idaho Extension, Twin Falls County • www.uidaho.edu/twinfalls



2024 By the Numbers

- **11,119** direct contacts
- **4,619** youth participants
- **247** volunteers
- **1,124** volunteer hours
- **\$1,916,955** extramural funding

Our Advisory Council

Special thanks to our volunteers who help shape programming and inform the work we do for UI Extension in Twin Falls County: Chance Munns, Tom Schwartz, LaMar Orton, James Reed, Kali Sherill, Kirk Tubbs, Earl Olsen, Robin Rausch, Tonya Corle, Sherry Olsen-Frank, Don Hall, Jack Johnson, Brett Reinke, Abby Greenfield, Cooper Smith, Katie Barnhill, Kelly Herrgesell, Kim Spiers, Kyli Gough, Makenzie Searle, Liz Mandelkow, Sarah Brown, Susie Beem, Karrie Ricketts, Jaysa Fillmore, Lydia Buffington and Lydia Miller.

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2024 Impact

The Spring Vegetable Planting Guide for Idaho publication authored by Educator Andy West is among the top viewed UI Extension publications and is used by many educators throughout the state. The bulletin and its planting chart are one of the most popular handouts provided by the UI Extension, Twin Falls office at events and on social media. This publication's popularity led to an interview with West by Boise Public Radio about the changes to the USDA Hardiness Zone map. The article was also picked up by the Idaho Nursery and Landscape Association and published in the September/October 2024 issue of Taproot magazine which is sent out to all members of the association. West also continues to support local homeschool groups by teaching horticulture and science-based programming on a regular basis. Some of the popular programs have been flower arranging, life skills, herbal medicine, fun with plants and ecology.

Educators Siew Guan Lee and Tina Miller collaborated to expand the indoor container garden SEED program which piloted in 2022. The program incorporated nutrition lessons and STEM activities to help youth learn about growing food and healthy behaviors. For the 2023-24 school year, 11 classroom gardens were established, reaching 223 youth. The Eat Smart Idaho team facilitated taste test activities with food the students grew, with 96% trying the food, 82% reporting they liked it and 77% reporting they would eat it again. Students could also identify at least one factor that plants need to grow.

While Eat Smart Idaho provides free nutrition education to low-income audience, participant recruitment and retention remains a challenge statewide. Lee obtained a donation of 40 air fryers as an incentive for individuals who completed Eat Smart Idaho's class series. This in-kind donation was made possible due to community partnership with funding through the IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence (INBRE) from the National Institutes of Health. Eat Smart Idaho adult classes were held in Jerome and Twin Falls, with 40 participants attending six to eight classes. The success of the partnership has allowed the program to expand next year, in collaboration with Everybody House, a non-profit organization to offer the class series in Spanish in Twin Falls. The Healthy Meals for Busy Families program was expanded to reach senior populations in Albion, Eden, Kimberly and Jerome, reaching 103 older adults.

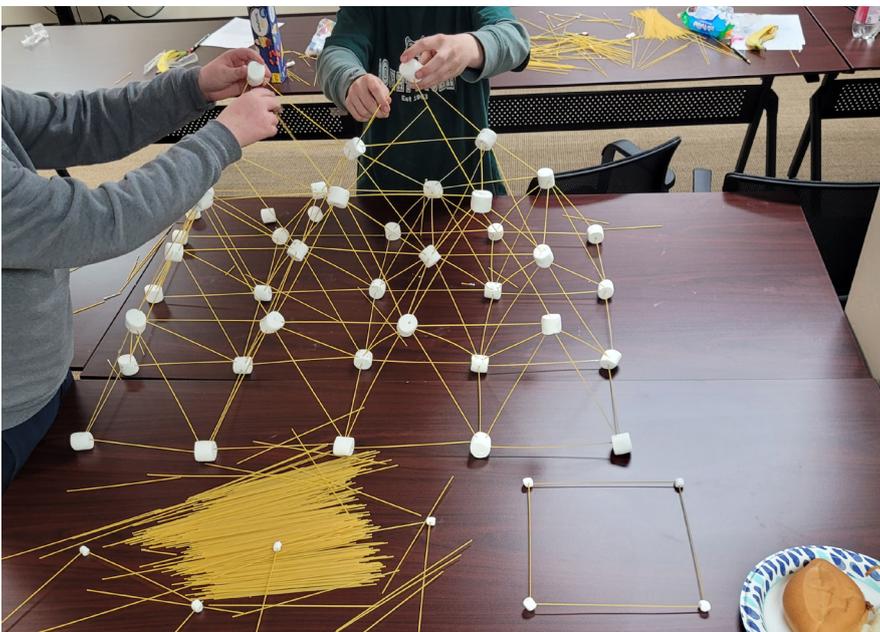
Miller worked with a local school to provide plant science education to first and second graders. By utilizing indoors gardens and grow windows she was able to demonstrate the process of how plants grow, what it takes to grow a plant, parts of a seed and parts of a plant. Funding for the Juntos program is in its final year with the goal of helping Latinx youth graduate from high school and pursue post-secondary education. There are currently 21 eighth graders enrolled in the program.

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4-H in Twin Falls County

A goal for the Twin Falls County 4-H program in 2024 was to enhance training for teens. Teen participants learned about positive youth development, communication, empathy, being a role model and having a voice. Leaders of Tomorrow (LOT) was a series of workshops that Miller conducted with youth in 4-7th grade. She chose this age to encourage them to become more involved in leadership and enhance their leadership skills at a younger age. Some of the skills they learned were communication, critical thinking and problem solving, empathy and teamwork.



On the Horizon

West is planning to collaborate with local partners to host a homesteading conference in the Magic Valley area. He is also looking into research on natural cures to plant diseases and fruit tree diseases.

Lee will collaborate with colleagues to develop two online youth curricula, sugarbeets and wheat. Each curriculum includes five lessons incorporating agriculture technologies, STEM activities, nutrition, food safety and recipe preparation to promote agricultural literacy and healthy behaviors among youth.

Miller is developing a short series of workshops in certain project areas. The goal is to expand and encourage youth that don't want to be in a club environment to participate in these workshops. They would still be in 4-H and complete a project, record book and community service project in a shorter time frame. The first projects to be introduced will be Trash to Treasure and Photography.