

# EXTENSION TRENDS: **VALLEY COUNTY**

University of Idaho Extension, Valley County • [www.uidaho.edu/valley](http://www.uidaho.edu/valley)



## 2024 By the Numbers

- **3,101** direct contacts
- **1,851** youth participants
- **73** volunteers
- **1,956** volunteer hours
- **\$3,522** extramural funding

## Our Advisory Council

Special thanks to our volunteers who help shape programming and inform the work we do for UI Extension in Valley County: Sandy Dingman, Steve Anderson, Shauna Arnold, Delta James, Sherry Maupin, Karla Eitel and Lindsey Harris.

## UI Extension Educator



**Melissa Hamilton**  
208-382-7190  
[mbhamilton@uidaho.edu](mailto:mbhamilton@uidaho.edu)

## 2024 Impact

Educator Melissa Hamilton taught 22 classes, facilitated 46 meetings/events and provided leadership for five community collaborations, focusing on community development, horticulture and agricultural education. For the Bienvenidos and Pride of the Pantry Plots Community Gardens, Hamilton organized volunteer workdays, expanded garden infrastructure and collaborated with Alzar School students for service days and co-taught youth garden art programs with UI Extension summer intern Emma Brulotte. She led the Cascade Placemaking committee for the Cascade Arts Walk, raising \$2,500 for public art. She partnered with the Cascade Cultural Arts Center for promotional events and facilitated placemaking committee meetings. For the WCM Food Coalition, she organized a volunteer committee to host a farm-to-table dinner, farmer outreach workshop and a podcast series. These efforts boosted local farmers' visibility and strengthened connections between producers and consumers. In partnership with the WCM Economic Development Council, the WCM Creative District committee participated in a UI Extension community development bootcamp and Hamilton facilitated monthly meetings. Multiple committee efforts including a community art swap and regional artisan tour were implemented. Valley, Bonneville, Blaine and Teton counties partnered to offer the first high-altitude hybrid Master Gardener series.

## 4-H in Valley County

4-H Coordinator Alysson Statz published an Impact Statement highlighting achievements from the 2022-23 ARPA grant cycle, which allocated \$80,000 to Valley County 4-H. Volunteer participation grew by 15%, reflecting improvements in training and recruitment. Valley County funded a full-time 4-H assistant to enhance youth development efforts. In this role, Alea Bunker has advanced livestock and horse programs with emphasis on education in animal husbandry. She partnered with Donnelly Elementary, Cascade Afterschool Programs and the Cascade Cultural Arts Center to provide year-round STEM and educational programming. Funding for Amy Ruiz, 4-H AmeriCorps, was secured primarily through community financial support. She expanded STEM and youth education initiatives by collaborating with McCall Schools, local libraries and the West Mountain Youth Advocacy Coalition. Bunker and Ruiz have broadened the reach of the Cloverbud program and introduced several new classes.

## On the Horizon

Community capacity building, including leadership roles in community gardens, placemaking, school partnerships and the development of the arts sector will continue to be a focus. Local gardeners and small-scale agricultural producers will be supported through Victory Garden, Master Gardener and Cultivating Success classes and food coalition efforts. Extension will also offer local businesses facilitation services and Real Colors personality assessments to enhance team development and soft skills. Opportunities to collaborate with Boise State University and Valley County on resiliency and natural resource planning efforts are being explored. The 4-H program will prioritize maintaining programming while enhancing its volunteer program, focusing on expanding volunteer orientations and implementing strategies to ensure a stronger, safer and more effective program delivery in line with Idaho 4-H state requirements. The UI Extension, Valley County team—Melissa Hamilton, Alysson Statz, Alea Bunker, Amy Ruiz and Jill Casal—all play a critical role in serving the community. In 2025, in collaboration with the UI Extension, Valley County Advisory Board, a community survey will be created to assess local needs and determine how UI Extension can best support the region through education, 4-H youth programming and community development capacity building.