2021 Impact
UI Extension, Valley County provides programming in community development, youth development, agriculture and horticulture. In 2021, the office continued to respond to the pandemic by leading hybrid and virtual classes to meet stakeholders needs.

Community development efforts included the formation of a nationally recognized virtual Diversity Learning Circle (DLC) and a Peer Learning Network (PLN). The DLC was hosted in partnership with Alpine Abby: New Meadows United Methodist Church. Participants concluded this six-month learning circle with an outdoor in-person celebratory gathering. The PLN gathered monthly allowing participants more rapid solution finding to community needs and issues. The PLN is part of the WeCAN network organized by UI Extension community development specialist Lorie Higgins. Other programs include the CISPUS Institute (virtual), ripple mapping assessment and committee facilitation for community partners including the Idaho Farmers Market Association, WCM Trails Coalition and the Valley County Opioid Response Team.

In 2021, an Advanced Master Gardener class explored the concept of extending the growing season in Valley County through the indoor cultivation of oyster mushrooms. Some Master Gardeners found success and cultivated mushrooms through experiential learning and the peer feedback process. This project, along with log inoculation for outdoor cultivation, will take place again in 2023.

4-H in Valley County
The UI Extension, Valley County 4-H Youth Development program received $80,000 of ARPA funding. Innovative drone and 3D printer STEM programs have been implemented throughout Valley County. In addition to STEM opportunities, youth have participated in sewing, leathercraft and shooting sports. The grant has expanded the reach and exposure to 4-H programs with increased enrollment in 4-H clubs and short-term enrollment programs. The 4-H Ambassador program, Know your Government and district youth opportunities continue to be shared with local youth participants. Two virtual programs were developed for the U and I Together family learning series including Get Outdoors and Energy Detectives programs in the summer and fall. AmeriCorps after-school youth development programs continue to be offered in partnership with the Donnelly Library and AmeriCorps summer placements continue to make an impact on year-round learning opportunities.

On the Horizon
In 2022, Educator Melissa Hamilton will be working with the City of Cascade to implement a Cascade Arts Walk (Placemaking project) in the downtown corridor. The Placemaking committee includes community partners such as the Horizons’ Lifestyle and Education Team, the city and community members at large. Funding for the Arts Walk was received from the University of Idaho innovation grant. In addition to the 2022 Arts Walk project, Hamilton will be organizing several bike and pedestrian counts. Data will be collected with citizen volunteers in 2022-23, to support the Cascade Mobility Team’s efforts to increase transportation options and accessibility throughout the city enhancing the concept of complete streets planning.