

impact

University of Idaho Extension
programs that are making a
difference in Idaho.

The longest table brings community together for food and fellowship

AT A GLANCE

Local partnerships bring together community for a combined shared meal in celebrating America's 250th anniversary as an opportunity to build on hope and possibilities for the future.

The Situation

America is celebrating its 250th anniversary of its founding, and reflection on where we are today both as a country and region is an opportunity to build on hope and possibilities for the future. During and post-COVID communities have changed dramatically, affecting how communities cope and engage, especially affecting the older population. Building social cohesion within different groups in a community is marked by strong social connections and high levels of social participation, that generates trust, norms of reciprocity and a sense of belonging.

Our Response

Over the past five years, the population of Grangeville, Idaho County, has experienced steady growth. Moving from a baseline of 3,308 residents during the 2020 Census, the city's population has increased to roughly 3,692 residents, representing an overall jump of approximately 11.04%.

University of Idaho Extension educator, Kirstin Jensen, partnered with the local school district, the private school, an afterschool/preschool program, the local public library, farmers market and the city chamber of commerce to gather funding and facilitate a



Community members enjoying The Longest Table event while creating new friendships.

community event referred to as The Longest Table. The overall intent was to collaborate with a wide variety of organizations to attract a large group of community members, provide an opportunity for connections around education, business and community wellbeing, and to create new friendships.

Funding was applied for and awarded by Innovia Foundation, a community foundation for eastern Washington and north Idaho. Innovia began offering microgrants to support community-led Longest Table events in the beginning of 2026. The Longest Table is a growing movement throughout the United States built on a simple, powerful idea: sharing a meal. Through this event, community members had the opportunity to make new connections, tie in with old friends as well

as increase trust and understanding, while celebrating America at 250. The Longest Table gatherings transform public spaces into welcoming places of connection. “By coming together around the table, participants are invited into conversation that fosters understanding, reduces isolation and strengthens communities.”

Grangeville’s The Longest Table event was held at the city park, tables and chairs were provided by the school district, and set-up/taken down by local high school students and volunteers. Anticipated attendance was between 150-200 people, and the event was held during the week to allow for after school/work participation. Butcher paper, crayons and talking points were provided on each table to facilitate conversation. To honor “America at 250,” decorations were put out across the tables, with pamphlets describing the history of all organizations collaborating on the event. In addition, a designated area was provided with outdoor games/activities for youth and adults.

Program Outcomes

The Longest Table event was advertised through local newspaper ads, citywide digital advertising boards and flyers for approximately one month prior to the event. On the day of the event, all partners gathered a few hours prior to the event to set up, and some of the grant money was used to buy pizza for anyone who did not or could not provide food of their own.

A total of 98 adults and 15 youth attended the event. Food was shared, stories were told and new friends were made. The Longest Table gatherings provide a local way to reflect, connect and envision a stronger, more united future together.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

Grangeville School District 246, Saints Peter and Paul Catholic School, Grangeville Centennial Library, Grangeville Farmers Market, Kids Klub, Grangeville Chamber of Commerce.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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