

EXTENSION TRENDS: **KOOTENAI COUNTY**

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2025 By the Numbers

- **21,506** direct contacts
- **14,786** youth participants
- **278** volunteers
- **6,504** volunteer hours
- **\$184,555** extramural funding

Our Advisory Council

Special thanks to agency partners, program participants and volunteers who help shape programming and inform the work we do for UI Extension in Kootenai County.

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2025 Impact

Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) programming in Kootenai County focuses on nutrition, wellness, and obesity prevention through education, strategies, and environmental change. Eat Smart Idaho works to improve access to healthier foods and physical activity opportunities for low-income families. Programming includes direct education and policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) strategies centered on school cafeterias, healthy food pantries and drives, novel food exposure, physical activity, and positive role models. In 2025, FCS programs reached 14,070 youth and adults across Coeur d'Alene and Post Falls School Districts, Boys & Girls Clubs, Head Start centers, transitional housing sites, and emergency food assistance locations. Eat Smart Idaho focuses on layered programming by combining multiple education and experience factors for the greatest impact. In summer 2025, programming at Northwest Expedition Academy and Winton Elementary layered seven weeks of nutrition education with PSE enhancements, including Healthy Harvest (fruit and vegetable exposure), Roving Chef (hands-on cooking with the district chef), and Soccer for Success (promoting physical activity and teamwork). A positive role model project reinforced healthy habits through mentorship, while art integration activities strengthened learning through creativity.

The Soccer for Success program was offered for the third year, expanding to Northwest Expedition Academy, Winton, and Ponderosa Elementaries in the Coeur d'Alene and Post Falls school districts. Funding was secured for three lead coach/mentors and two support coach/mentors, who facilitated sessions featuring multiple skill-development stations designed to build confidence, coordination, and enjoyment of physical activity. Each participant received take-home soccer equipment allowing them to continue practicing at home. A defining feature of the 2025 program was the intentional integration of role models. Each week, college interns developed youth-centered stories highlighting professional athletes known for their resilience, discipline, and positive character. Athlete stories illustrated themes of teamwork, perseverance, healthy habits, and leadership, helping youth connect real examples of success with values they could apply in their own lives. Youth also benefited from visits by local role models, including college athletes from the area who shared personal stories of grit, determination, and balancing academics with athletics. Soccer for Success reached 137 youth with improvements in wellness behaviors and increased activity levels.

The Idaho Master Gardener program in Kootenai County provides horticulture education and supports horticulture-based volunteer



development throughout the community. In 2025, 22 Master Gardener volunteers dedicated a total of 2,544 hours serving Kootenai County residents through the Q&A hotline, Plant Clinic, demonstration garden, and educational classes. These efforts focused on resilient landscapes, efficient and clean water use, increasing property value, and fostering a healthy relationship with nature and the community. Master Gardener services offer free or low-cost educational opportunities, including easy, do-it-yourself guidance on growing food, supporting the soil food web, and building practical horticulture skills. Volunteers also operate a free diagnostic service to assist residents with insect identification, plant disease diagnosis, and plant selection questions. In 2025, the Plant Clinic served 517 clients, while 529 community members participated in educational classes. Hands-on labs were also offered to strengthen diagnostic skills and enhance the Master Gardener learning experience.

A total of 218 forest owners, loggers and professional foresters attended UI Extension forestry programs held in Kootenai County. Fifteen Kootenai County forest owners are currently certified UI Extension volunteers with the Idaho Master Forest Stewards, who provided over 750 hours of volunteer service to 1,867 forest owners and others in northern Idaho counties.

4-H in Kootenai County

The UI Extension 4-H program works year-round to spread education surrounding agriculture, STEM, and creative arts. During the 10-day North Idaho State Fair in 2025, UI Extension reached 169,152 guests through the project barn, livestock buildings and youth walking the grounds. Outside of fair season, the 4-H program is active in local schools, shows, parades and other events and locations to spread education and bring more youth into the program. The 4-H STEM program serves youth of all ages and experience levels, from beginners discovering STEM for the first time to teens preparing for college and careers. The goal isn't just to create future scientists or engineers, but to empower young people with life skills to succeed in any path they choose.



With 474 youth participants, 109 adult volunteers, and a new program coordinator, the learning opportunities were plentiful for youth in 2025. Despite only having a coordinator for six months, the 4-H program flourished with achievements. One youth member received the 2025 Idaho Cattle Association Superior Beef Award, while another competed at the national level in Horse Bowl and Hippology at the All-American Quarter Horse Congress Youth Contests. Four others took the top five spots at the inaugural Idaho State Buckle Up Shoot and 16 more went on to compete at the 2025 Idaho State Shooting Sports Contest where a handful more qualified for the 2025 National Shooting Sports Contest in Nebraska. Throughout the year, 853

projects were completed across agriculture, STEM, and art fields. A total of 53 community-sponsored project awards were given to youth and leaders alike. One local youth was elected by a panel to a top leadership position in the Know Your Government program. The 4-H STEM program hosted 109 classes attended by 3,534 youth. STEM topics are presented to youth through real world projects and creative problem solving. Youth experience STEM concepts while building, experimenting, coding, designing, testing, and improving ideas in a fun supportive environment with adult mentors. The digital media program produced 34 videos and teens learned how to use video equipment to live stream several 4-H events. The videos produced were viewed 7,692 times and gave teens the opportunity to engage in public speaking, graphic design, and marketing skills.

On the Horizon



The need for emergency food assistance continues to grow in Kootenai County as more families face food insecurity and uncertainty around SNAP benefits. Second Harvest addresses this need through its Mobile Market program, which delivers free, healthy groceries to individuals in local communities. Extension Educator Shelly Johnson spearheaded a partnership with Second Harvest, the Coeur d'Alene School District, and Venture High School to host four Mobile Markets in 2025. These events increased food access and engaged high school students and sports teams in meaningful community service. Students assisted with event operations, greeted families, and helped load groceries using a safe, drive-through model. In addition to food distribution, Eat Smart Idaho provided simple, healthy recipes to support nutritious meal preparation using the foods received. As a result, 1,024 families received groceries, more than 50,000 meals were distributed, and 135 volunteers contributed 4,111 service hours. Building on this success, Johnson has secured five additional Mobile Market events for 2026.

UI Extension has acquired a "STEM bus" which will provide a mobile classroom for youth and partnerships are being formed with local schools for the AgRobotics program. The 4-H program will also rejuvenate the County Oral Presentation competition in 2026. Plans include creating better incentives through community sponsorships, opening the contest for public participation, securing judges from the community, and moving forward with the creation of District Oral Presentations to encourage competitiveness for all youth participants. The 4-H program will also put an emphasis on trying out of the box methods to involve the community more. Ideas include 4-H fun runs, movie nights at the fairgrounds, community dinners, and many others that will drum up interest in the program.