



Press Release

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For Immediate Release

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Sun Valley Institute Launches Next Phase New Executive Director, Board Members

- *Five years since its founding, Sun Valley Institute, a Center for Resilience, announces new Executive Director and Board Members to meet growing needs of the community and beyond*
- *Incoming Executive Director, Lexie Praggastis, has been a member of the Sun Valley Institute team since 2017 and brings operational expertise and programmatic vision to her new role*
- *The Institute's systemic work on resilience has included community-wide resilience workshops to identify key risks and progress resilience solutions, its early energy programs of Solarize Blaine and RevUp Blaine, and its food and farm program, Local Food Alliance*
- *During this time of the pandemic, Sun Valley Institute has been providing critical local support by coordinating the Blaine Recovery Committee including guiding the launch of blainerecovery.org (English and Spanish language information resources for recovery), and Spanish language video interview series, Viva Bien 5B.*
- *Additionally, at the start of the pandemic, our Food and Farm program immediately began collecting and publicizing food resources with the community.*
- *The Institute will continue to meet urgent needs while also building resilience for the long term*

Blaine County, Idaho -- Sun Valley Institute, a nonprofit founded in the spring of 2015 to support community leadership in resilience, today announces the launch of its next phase with a new Executive Director and Board Members. Lexie Praggastis will succeed the organization's founding Executive Director, Aimée Christensen. Ms. Christensen will continue to contribute to and support the organization as Board President. New additions to the Institute's board of directors include Brian Bean, co-founder of Lava Lake Institute, Lava Lake Land & Livestock and Lava Lake Lamb, Kim Pertel of the Stillwater Foundation, and Scott Pertel of Cold Summit Development.

Under the leadership of Ms. Christensen, the Institute has advanced resilience by convening the community to identify its greatest risks and opportunities, by developing specific projects to

advance together, and by building programs to transform regional food and energy systems, two critical sectors for community resilience. The Institute has been a leader in systemic resilience work, convening global thought leaders and changemakers at the annual Sun Valley Forum and scaling high-impact initiatives at speed by connecting projects to resources. Locally, the organization has held community-wide resilience workshops to identify risks and progress resilience solutions including Solarize Blaine, the first Solarize program in Idaho, which directly increased solar in Blaine County by 500% in one year, RevUp Blaine, which quintupled the number of electric vehicles in Blaine County, and the Food and Farm Program, the Local Food Alliance, whose vision for a regenerative agriculture future in Idaho is a semifinalist for the Rockefeller Foundation's *Food System Vision Prize*, and has just released the inaugural *Locally Grown Guide*, a comprehensive resource of our regionally-produced foods.

"Sun Valley Institute was founded to address the threats impacting our rural community's quality of life. From catastrophic wildfires and water shortages to energy insecurity, Blaine County needed a focus on resilience. For five years our team has worked tirelessly, developing model local programs and convening global leaders to create a more resilient community and world," said Christensen. "Under Lexie's leadership, the Institute will continue to lead, building on its foundational work to meet current needs and grow for the future, mobilizing resources to build back better after the impacts of COVID-19. I am gratified that we have attracted such a capable, qualified, and dedicated leader to take the organization forward."

"This pandemic has underscored the need for resilience in all of our systems, including our food system," said Lexie Praggastis. "Building resilience and becoming a model for it was the founding vision of the Institute and this work has never been more critical. I am humbled and honored to lead this organization. I want to thank Aimée for her amazing work in this field and for building the Institute. I am excited for this opportunity to support our community now and into the future."

To learn more about the Sun Valley Institute's mission and programs, please visit www.sunvalleyinstitute.org and to learn more about its specific COVID-19 recovery support, please visit www.blainerecovery.org

About the Sun Valley Institute

Five years ago, a combination of local and global threats matched by a vision of opportunity, led to the founding of the [Sun Valley Institute](http://www.sunvalleyinstitute.org). In the wake of the 2013 Beaver Creek Fire, widespread droughts, snowfall changes, high food prices and significant power outages due to our location at the edge of the grid, Sun Valley leaders founded SVI as a center for resilience, to turn our risks into opportunity. Over those five years, SVI has advanced resilience by convening the community to identify their greatest risks and opportunities, by developing specific projects to advance together, and by building programs to transform regional food and energy systems, two critical sectors for community resilience. This history of advancing resilience allows SVI to mobilize resources in the face of the current COVID-19 pandemic and is dedicated to supporting our whole community and we are working to connect resources to the people who need them. Please reach out by email or through our social media with any community needs that you are seeing. For more information, please visit: www.sunvalleyinstitute.org and follow the institute on Twitter [@SunValleyInst](https://twitter.com/SunValleyInst) and Instagram at [@SunValleyInstitute](https://www.instagram.com/SunValleyInstitute) and Facebook at facebook.com/sunvalleyinstitute