



Harvest for Health Program

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The Vision

Use Horticultural knowledge to grow and improve personal nutrition and mobility for the health and wellness of cancer survivors.

Program Activities

Harvest for Health is funded by the National Cancer Institute, Auburn University/Alabama Cooperative Extension System, the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) and the Webb Family of Birmingham. Master Gardeners are paired with cancer survivors to establish raised bed or container vegetable gardens at the cancer survivor’s home. The purpose of this project is to evaluate how gardening affects several aspects of a cancer survivor’s life – physically, nutritionally and quality of life.

To gain accurate results, a requirement for participation in this program is that the survivor could not currently be or have recently been a vegetable gardener. Due to this lack of knowledge, intervention individuals are paired with a Master Gardener to work alongside the survivor, serving as their mentor.

Educational Objectives

Cancer survivors are at greater risk for the presence of one or more additional diseases, and poor health. Gardening interventions, particularly those that promote increased vegetable consumption, promise to improve diet and exercise behaviors. Harvest for Health (H4H) is an at-home gardening intervention for cancer survivors who have completed their primary cancer treatment. We aimed to teach and provide cancer survivors, over the age of 65, within Alabama, the means to grow an at-home vegetable garden through a series of 2-year intervention programs.

Effects measured include: diet, physical activity, physical function, quality of life and healthy eating measured by periodic objective medical assessments done by trained professionals.

The study once completed aims to show that healthy eating along with more mobility and exercise that gardening encourages will improve their quality of life and lessen the chance of the recurrence of cancer.

Master Gardener Responsibilities

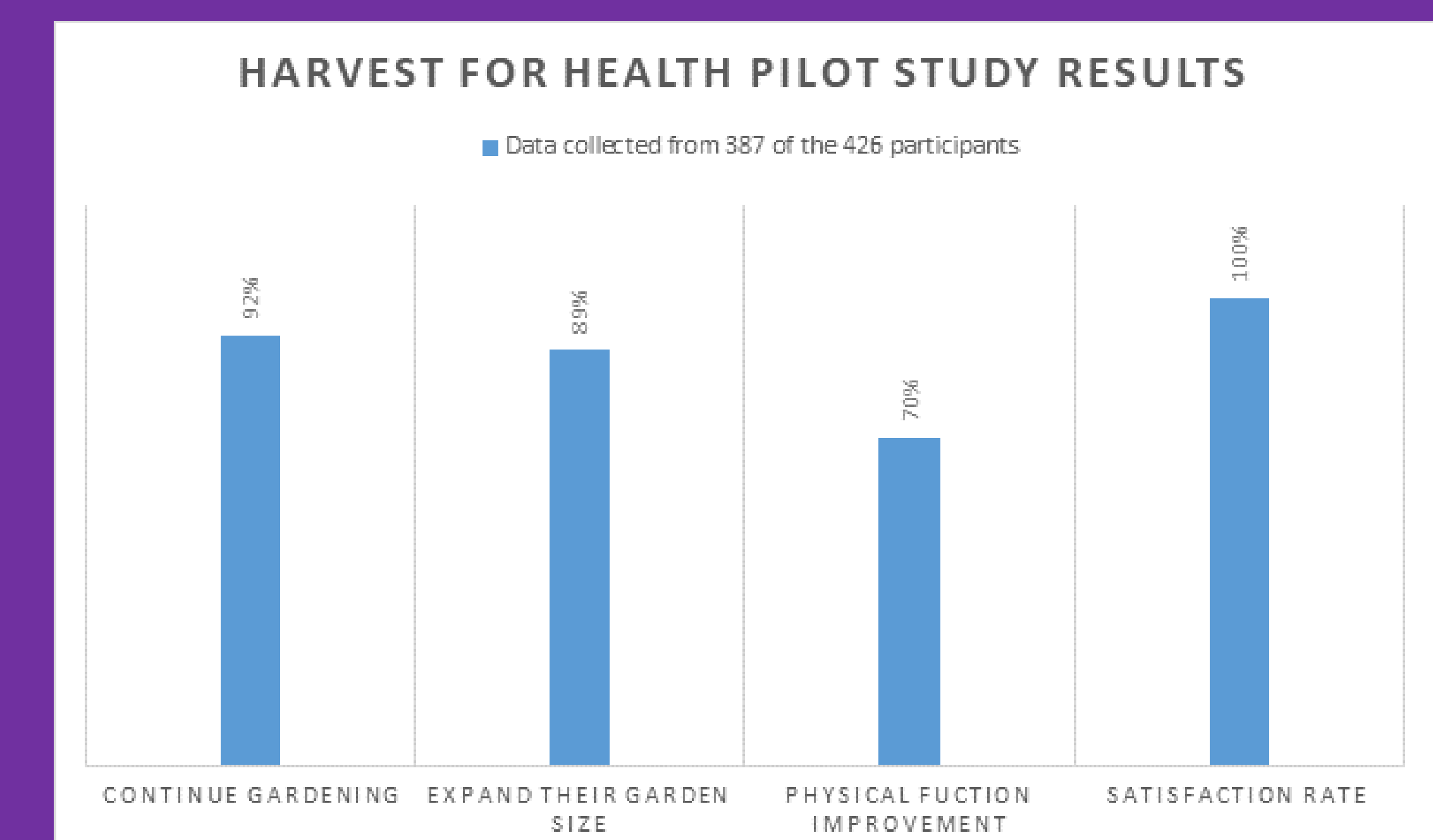
- Alabama Master Gardeners serve as a mentor to cancer survivors identified by the University of Alabama in Birmingham (UAB) to teach them how to grow vegetables in their own backyard.
- Master Gardener mentors meet on site at least monthly with their survivor. Phone calls were encouraged between those monthly visits.
- A private Facebook group was created as a forum for survivors from across the state to share garden successes, challenges and questions.



Study Results

The results from the pilot study 2014-2016 Study will not conclude until 2022

- 2 Studies combined =125 cancer survivors
- 55% increase in the consumption of fruits and vegetables with more than or equal to 1 serving per day
- 38% increased their physical activity by greater than or equal to 30 minutes per week.
- 79% had improvements on their senior fitness battery test.
- 85% continued to garden 1 year after the study ended.



Harvest for Health Study

Survivors diagnosed with the following cancers in these Alabama counties are eligible to be part of the Harvest for Health study.

In situ/Localized

- Bladder
- Gastric cardia
- Larynx
- Multiple myeloma
- Uterine cervix

In situ/Localized/Regional

- Breast (female)
- Colorectal
- Fallopian tube
- Kidney
- Melanoma
- Oral cavity/Pharynx
- Ovary
- Prostate
- Soft tissue sarcoma
- Thyroid
- Uterine Corpus
- Squamous & basal cell skin cancer

All stages

- Leukemia (CML, CLL, ALL)
- Hodgkin lymphoma
- Non-Hodgkin lymphoma
- Testis

INFO:
For more information, or to enroll, please call toll-free 1-844-476-9478.

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Participant Testimonial

“I was initially diagnosed with Stage 4 Breast Cancer in 2010. I chose to take no more treatments after one traditional treatment that I came close to dying from. After being diagnosed with Stage 4 Bone Cancer in 2014, I was accepted into the “HARVEST FOR HEALTH” study. “H4H” gave me the chance to grow my own vegetables, herbs and fruits in wheeled containers. I grew broccoli, carrots, herbs, zucchini, strawberries, onions, watermelon and cantaloupe, chives, parsley, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, green beans, turnips, spinach, kale, yellow squash, mustard greens. The more of my produce I grew and ate the healthier I became. Now, several years later, I am positive that eating my own healthy grown vegetables, fruits and herbs with God-given nutrients and properties is the very reason I am still here and alive today.”

Betty Jayne Byrd, 2020

Materials Provided to Participants

- Resource binders: numerous research-based Extension publications related to growing practices and disease and insect management.
- A garden kit (their choice of garden setup) – 4 garden boxes or 1-4 x 8 raised bed, vegetable plants and seeds, potting mix, pine mulch-nuggets-to cover the soil for moisture retention, insect control and fertilizer, bamboo stakes, soaker and garden hoses, watering can, water hose nozzle, hand cultivator, hand trowel, gloves, and winter row-cover.

Featured on Alabama Public Television’s “Spotlight on Agriculture” : <https://to.pbs.org/33i0dFe>