



# Extension engages volunteers to increase produce for seniors at Farmers Market

Agenbroad, Ariel L.<sup>1</sup> Stokes, Bradley<sup>2</sup> Greenway, Surine<sup>3</sup> <sup>1</sup>Area Educator, Community Food Systems and Small Farms, University of Idaho Extension, Boise, ID, 83714. <sup>2</sup>Extension Educator, University of Idaho Extension, Caldwell, ID, 83605. <sup>3</sup>Extension Educator, University of Idaho Extension, Marsing, ID, 83639.



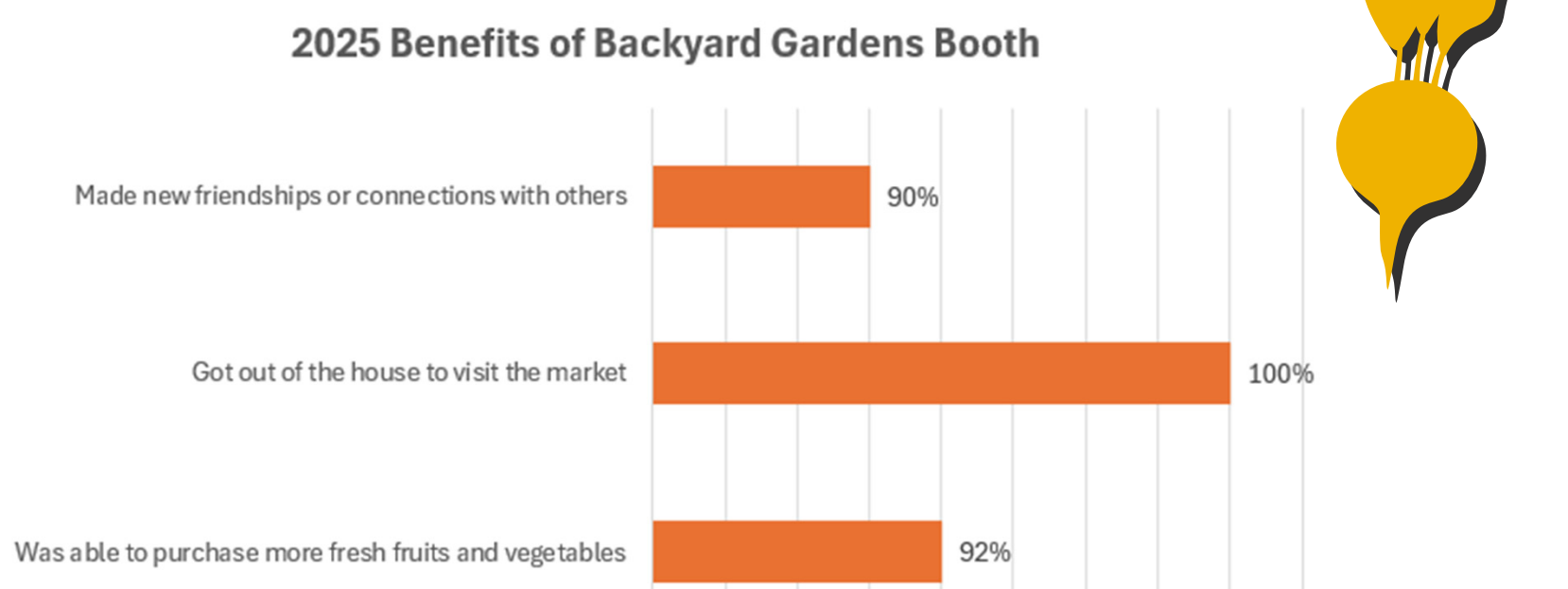
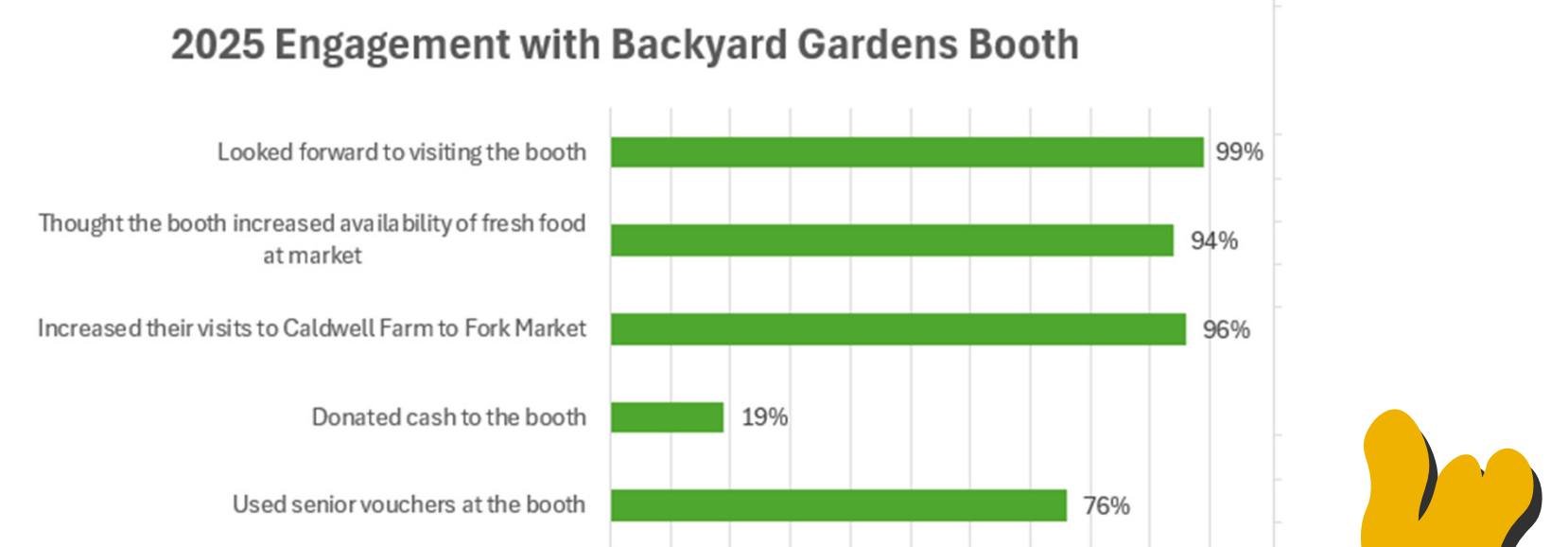
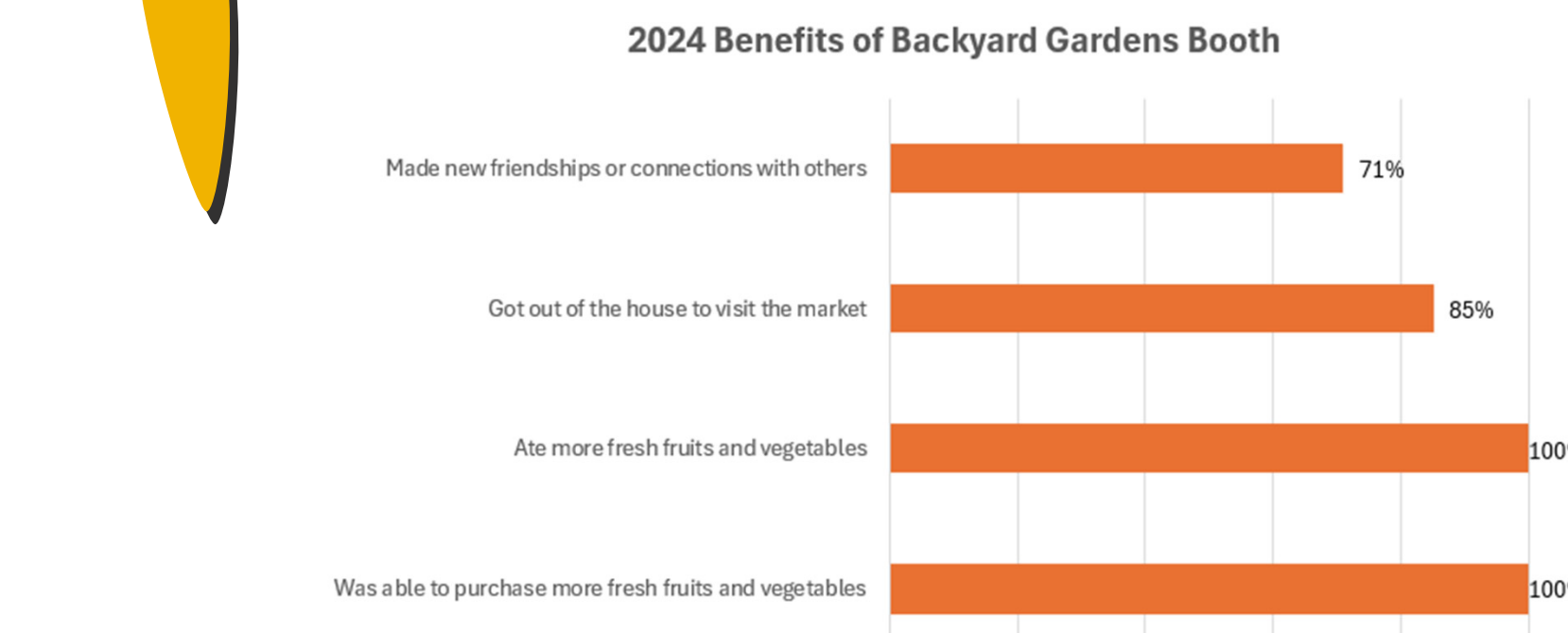
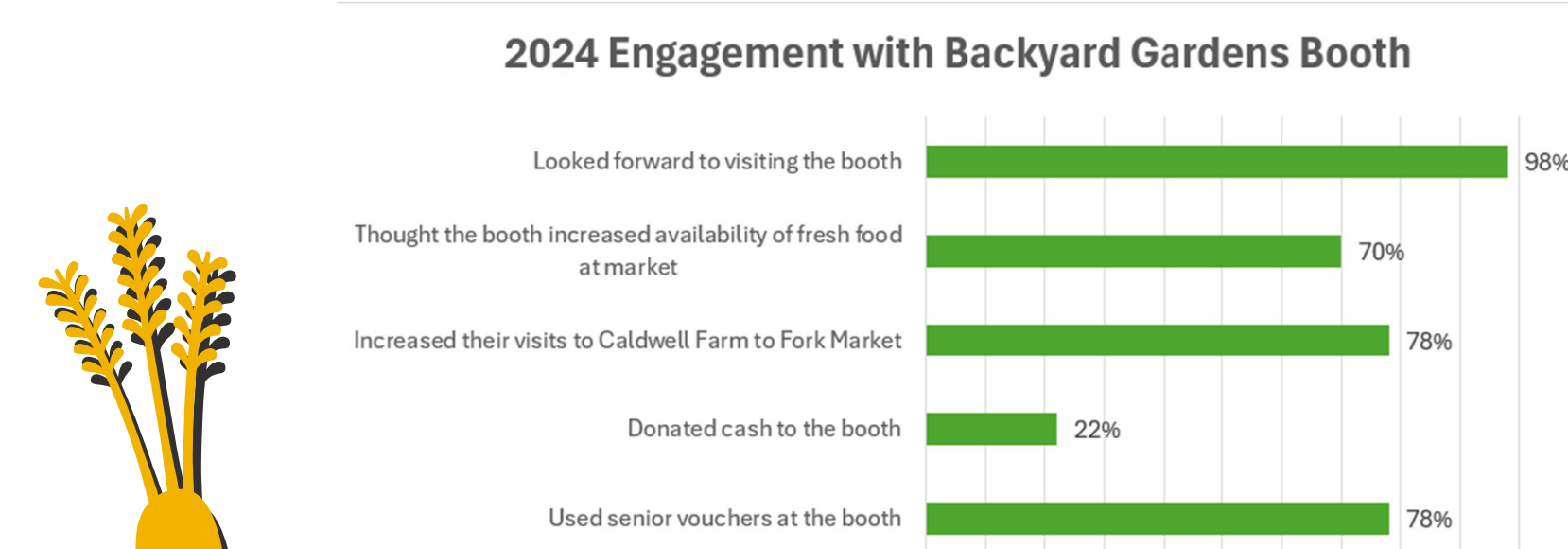
The Caldwell Farm to Fork Market is a relatively new Farmers Market that sponsors a Senior Produce Voucher Program and struggles to maintain a steady roster of fruit and vegetable vendors, limiting the supply available.

Extension was contacted for ideas to help meet the gap in supply. We wondered if home garden abundance in the community could serve as a source of supplemental seasonal produce without displacing growers?

Backyard Gardens is a University of Idaho Extension-led initiative to collect and aggregate fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs grown by Extension Master Gardener volunteers trained to safely grow, harvest and distribute produce to community members participating in the Senior Nutrition Voucher Program.

The booth was staffed for 12 weeks by Extension Educators, interns, and volunteers from Canyon and Owyhee County Master Gardener and Master Food Safety Advisor programs. It operated in the summers of 2024 and 2025, sharing fresh food with voucher holders, and surveying participants to learn about increases in their fresh food purchasing, shopping habits and social engagement at the Tuesday evening Farmers Market.

Program outcomes suggest that eager community volunteers can be mobilized to meet temporary or small-scale local shortages in fresh food from their home and community gardens and contribute to multiple positive impacts.



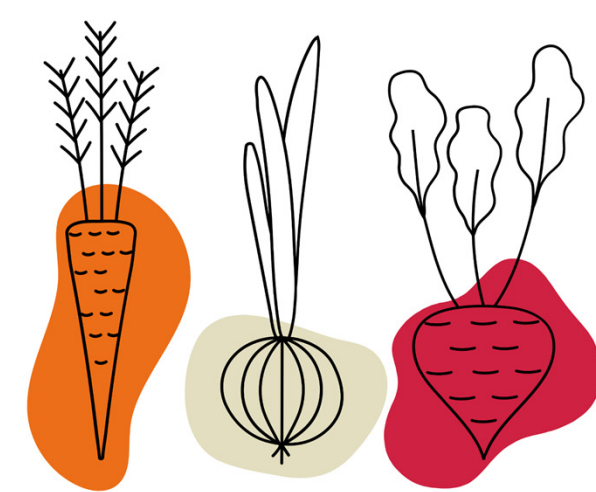
## Key Outcomes for 2024 and 2025 Seasons:

- Number of volunteers: **38**
- Number of volunteer hours contributed: **230**
- Varieties of vegetables grown and donated: **57**
- Average number of seniors served weekly: **55**
- Pounds of vegetables donated: **4537**
- Dollar value of vouchers redeemed: **\$2969.00**

## Key Observation:

The market atmosphere encourages repeat visits, socialization & autonomy of choice for voucher recipients without stigma, contributing to positive physical, social & nutritional health impacts.

University of Idaho, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Idaho counties cooperating. The University of Idaho is an equal opportunity employer.



**BACKYARD GARDENS**  
Neighbors Growing Food to Share

