

# That's My Farmer

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*A Research-Based  
Nutrition & Wellness  
Program*

**T**hat's My Farmer is a research-based nutrition and wellness program designed to educate cancer survivors through hands-on learning. The multi-week program combines education on anti-inflammatory nutrition, healthy food shopping and preparation, and the benefits of eating local fresh fruits and vegetables with emphasis on the positive impact that wholesome foods can have for patients recovering from cancer. Through Samaritan Health Services—a five-hospital system in Oregon—the educational series takes place at affiliated locations and local farmers' markets in the region's mid-Willamette Valley. Registered dietitians from the Samaritan Cancer Program deliver weekly educational modules to enrolled participants using research-based nutrition guidelines. Participants also receive vouchers to aid in purchasing fresh produce.

### In the Beginning

Initially, the 2013 pilot program of *That's My Farmer* focused on the diabetic community. A collaborative project between a local free medical clinic and a regional local farmers' network provided accessible and convenient diabetes education. Through this partnership, patients suffering from diet-related illnesses were referred to *That's My Farmer* to receive individualized nutrition education and farmers' market vouchers. A local physician and a provider working in the free medical clinic coordinated the pilot program, while a certified diabetes educator was contracted to provide patients with nutrition education specific to participants' needs.

Participants in the 2013 pilot received education on the proper use of glucometers and glucose testing, pertinent information about diabetes, portion sizes of foods, and the importance of exercise and activity in managing blood sugar levels and diabetes. The benefits of counting carbohydrates and keeping daily logs of food intake and blood sugar levels were also addressed with participants. In total, 114 individualized

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Samaritan Cancer Resource Center leadership championed the program, successfully engaging other organizations and support throughout the Samaritan Health Services system to modify *That's My Farmer* and provide local cancer survivors with research-based information to help improve their overall well-being.

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appointments were provided to 44 patients with uncontrolled type II diabetes. This program fulfilled an unmet need for low-income diabetics by providing valuable skills and education to change lives for the better.

### Identifying a Need

One tool used to obtain pertinent information regarding the needs and health-associated risk behaviors of local cancer patients is the Community Cancer Needs Assessment. This survey was conducted in 2014 in collaboration with local health departments in Oregon's Benton, Lincoln, and Linn counties, which comprise the geographic area served by the Samaritan Health Services system. Cancer Needs Assessment survey data from the community is an important identifier of health risks. Table 1, page 57, shows the percentage of adults in Oregon who engage in selected risk



Cancer survivors Loren and Connie Smith of Albany, Ore., attended *That's My Farmer* together. "We learned how to shop and what questions to ask about the food we buy," said Connie. "It's made me more aware of how to take care of my own health." The couple also enjoyed learning what's seasonal in Oregon. Pictured here in 2014, the couple shops at Albany Oregon Farmers' Market.

behaviors. Data revealed that in all counties, an average of less than 1 in 4 individuals were eating 5 or more fruit or vegetables per day. This is an important area for improvement, and adapting the *That's My Farmer* program for cancer patients would help meet this need.

### Adapting the Program for Cancer Survivors

Building on the success of the diabetic pilot program, in 2014 the Samaritan Cancer Resource Center, the local free medical clinic, and Samaritan Health Services' dietitians collaborated to pilot a *That's My Farmer* program specifically for cancer survivors. Samaritan Cancer Resource Center leadership championed the program, successfully engaging other organizations and support throughout the Samaritan Health Services system to modify *That's My Farmer* and provide local cancer survivors with research-based information to help improve their overall well-being. Cancer survivors (participants) were invited to bring their spouse or caregiver with them to weekly classes and trips to local farmers' markets.

The first *That's My Farmer* for cancer survivors took in place in 2014 in Albany, Ore. Sixteen participants registered for the program, receiving 12 weeks of nutrition education and vouchers to be used for purchasing unprocessed fruits, vegetables, beans, and grains. These participants were identified by oncology dietitians and invited from various cancer support groups. Of the 16 original participants, 12 completed the program; drop-outs were due to illness and/or fatigue. Educational modules included:

- Research-based nutrition guidelines.
- Advice on eating locally and seasonally available food.
- Recommendations for physical activity.

- Information on nutritional supplements.
- Exploration of the relationship between cancer and sugar.
- Information on meditation, affirmations and positive thinking, and discussion of emotions around food.

The *That's My Farmer* program also fostered meaningful relationships and friendships by connecting individuals whose lives had been touched by cancer with others on the same or similar journey. Each participant received a canvas shopping bag to take to the farmers' market along with a recipe card holder, dried beans and polenta, a crock pot, a jar of honey, and herbs and spices.

Participants met at a nearby farmers' market and were given vouchers to purchase fresh produce. These vouchers offered participants a weekly opportunity to use their in-class knowledge and purchase fresh produce. With operational funds provided by the Albany General Hospital Foundation, by the conclusion of the program each participant had received \$150 to \$200 in vouchers. The weekly voucher amount depended on the number of enrollees (i.e., more enrollees equaled a lower dollar amount). Vouchers were only permitted to be used toward the purchase of unprocessed fruits, vegetables, beans, and grains.

Participants were encouraged to fill out a survey on personal eating habits and to give feedback on the program. These surveys provided important data that was used to improve the *That's My Farmer* program and ultimately support expansion to other nearby cities.

### Reshaping the Program

In 2015 *That's My Farmer* expanded to include the nearby communities of Lebanon and Corvallis in addition to Albany. Based

**Table 1. Select Results of the Cancer Needs Assessment**

CANCER NEEDS ASSESSMENT	BENTON COUNTY	LINCOLN COUNTY	LINN COUNTY	OREGON
Consumed 7 or more sugar-sweetened beverages per week	7.2%	20.0%	15.9%	13.3%
Consumed 5 or more fruits and vegetables per day	21.7%	23.9%	19.2%	21.9%
Current smoker	14.3%	33.1%	20.5%	19.0%
Obese	21.2%	30.3%	33.2%	25.9%
No physical activity in past month	12.9%	16.1%	21.5%	18.0%
Binge drinking the past month	17.2%	16.2%	21.9%	17.7%

on survey feedback from prior years, the series was shortened from 12 to 8 weeks. Information included in the 2015 *That's My Farmer* program was similar to the content in previous years, but it was expanded based on participant requests. In addition to the weekly class sessions, participants continued to meet at local farmers' markets to use their vouchers. Topics addressed in the 2015 sessions included:

- Research-based nutrition guidelines specific to cancer prevention.
- Recommendations for fitness and physical activity.
- Self-care and mindfulness.
- Use and safety of nutritional supplements.
- The relationship between sugar and cancer.

Similar to the prior year, 2015 participants at the three sites received a canvas shopping bag, a cookbook, a calendar, recipe cards, dried beans, grains, and herbs and spices. Instead of crockpots for each participant, weekly prizes were awarded after participants answered knowledge-based questions. Local businesses donated these weekly prizes to aid in the preparation of nutritious foods, improve self-care practices, and promote physical activity.

During the farmers' market meetings, local student volunteers assisted participants. Specifically, students from the dietetics program at Oregon State University and medical students from the nearby College of Osteopathic Medicine of the Pacific-Northwest developed and disseminated seasonal "Pick of the Week" flyers to participants. These educational flyers provided nutrition information about a fruit or a vegetable, as well as selection and storage information. Participants were asked to spend a portion of their vouchers on the "Pick of the Week"

items and spend the remaining vouchers on produce of their choice. These student volunteers decided on the "Pick of the Week" before participants arrived at the market, based on the produce available at the market that day. With the addition of the "Pick of the Week" component, many participants tried several fruits and vegetables for the first time. One participant shared, "I really liked being exposed to fruits and veggies that I don't normally use."

The team leading the 2015-16 *That's My Farmer* program consisted of three registered dietitians, staff from the Samaritan Cancer Resource Center, and student leaders. Along with the registered dietitians who facilitate the weekly classes and food demonstrations, the program brings in other healthcare providers, such as:

- Certified diabetes educators to talk about insulin resistance.
- Social workers to address mindfulness, self-care, and stress management.
- Certified personal trainers, some with cancer-specific training, to provide information on physical activity recommendations and appropriate modifications for participants.

In 2015 and 2016, the combined total used to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables through vouchers reached more than \$10,000. This money goes directly to local farmers, thus, strengthening the local economy as well.

At the end of 2016, participant feedback led to further refinements to the program. Generally speaking, participants highly valued the weekly vouchers, liked the cookbook above other incentives (shopping bag, spices, etc.), preferred more

*(continued on page 59)*

Figure 1. Samaritan Health Services *That's My Farmer* Pre-Survey



PARTICIPANT ID: \_\_\_\_\_

WEEK #: \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for taking the time to fill out this intake survey.**

What resources have you utilized in the past year? (Please circle all that apply):

- Cancer Resource Center                       Dietitian                       Social worker  
 Support groups (i.e., art therapy, SurvivorFit, Living Well). Please list:

Other support(s). Please list:

What other specific information or resources are you looking to learn? What do you hope to gain from this program?

Is there anything you would like the group leaders to know about you or your needs?

**Thank you for taking this survey to help us improve the TMF program. We will keep your answers confidential. Please ask your lead dietitian or volunteer if you have any questions and/or concerns about this survey.**

1. Over the past 7 days, how often did you eat vegetables?	Never <input type="checkbox"/>	1 time per day <input type="checkbox"/>	2 times per day <input type="checkbox"/>	3 times per day <input type="checkbox"/>	4 times per day <input type="checkbox"/>	5 or more times per day <input type="checkbox"/>
2. When you ate vegetables, how much did you usually eat per day?	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	Less than 1/2 cup <input type="checkbox"/>	1 cup <input type="checkbox"/>	2 cups <input type="checkbox"/>	More than 2 cups <input type="checkbox"/>	More than 3 cups <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Over the past 7 days, how often did you eat fruit?	Never <input type="checkbox"/>	1 time per day <input type="checkbox"/>	2 times per day <input type="checkbox"/>	3 times per day <input type="checkbox"/>	4 times per day <input type="checkbox"/>	5 or more times per day <input type="checkbox"/>
4. When you ate fruit, how much did you usually eat per day?	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	Less than 1/2 cup <input type="checkbox"/>	1 cup <input type="checkbox"/>	2 cups <input type="checkbox"/>	More than 2 cups <input type="checkbox"/>	More than 3 cups <input type="checkbox"/>
5. How confident are you with the following?		Extremely confident (I'm a pro)	Neutral (I'm ok)	Not confident (I need help)	I'm not sure	
Selecting fresh vegetables and fruit		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Storing fresh vegetables and fruit		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Preparing healthy meals		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Trying new things in the kitchen		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Eating healthy on a budget		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

*(continued from page 57)*

interaction during class and less didactic delivery of information via PowerPoint, and suggested changes to the program length and times offered. These changes were incorporated into the current version of *That's My Farmer*. This participant feedback has been key to programmatic success. Not only does constructive criticism and advice improve the program content and structure, it also creates a connection between the *That's My Farmer* team, the Samaritan Cancer Program, community partners, and local cancer survivor participants.

### **Tracking & Changing Behavior**

While data from the Cancer Needs Assessment, and enrollment, attendance, and feedback in *That's My Farmer* highlight the immediate need and impact of the educational program, long-lasting impact is imperative to improved health outcomes. To extend learning beyond *That's My Farmer*, each participant receives a cookbook to use during the program and afterwards. The 2013 *Farm-Fresh and Fast* cookbook by Fairshare CSA Coalition features practical recipes using fruits and vegetables. Cooking demonstrations, using recipes from the *Farm-Fresh and Fast* cookbook, were provided to participants during *That's My Farmer* class sessions. "Pick of the Week" flyers included page numbers for recipes calling for the highlighted fruit or vegetable. This connection between the cookbook and the farmers' market led participants to try new foods and recipes and share their experiences with each other. During the following class sessions, participants would discuss their "Pick of the Week" and how they prepared it. This opportunity allowed participants to share information, build relationships, and encourage each other to continue making healthy choices.

Discussions between the dietitians and participants provided informal feedback on intake, experiences, and opportunities for growth. The relaxed atmosphere allowed participants the opportunity to share what they were gaining from the program and ask questions as they arose. Questions were recorded, either by the dietitian or lead volunteer, and followed up on as needed. These informal notes and, more importantly, pre- and post-surveys, provide valuable information on the needs of this population.

Registered dietitians use pre- and post-surveys to track participants' fruit and vegetable intake, knowledge of the information presented, and confidence in adopting healthy eating habits. Surveys are administered during the first and last week of the program. The pre- and post-surveys measure portion sizes of fruits and vegetables and intake. They also measure confidence regarding selection, storage, and preparation of fruits and vegetables. The pre-survey (Figure 1, left) touches on the various resources the participants have used within the Samaritan Cancer Program, resources or information they would like provided to them, and if there are any needs the group leaders should be aware of.

The post-survey (Figure 2, pages 60-61) asks questions about the program itself, including level of satisfaction, knowledge level of presenters, usefulness and relevance of program content, and whether participants would recommend *That's My Farmer* to others. The post-survey also includes open-ended questions about

*(continued on page 62)*

### **What Participants Had to Say...**

*"I really enjoyed this program. As a patient with cancer, diabetes, and a heart condition, the program has restarted my eating right."*

*"That's My Farmer sparked my interest in learning more about healthy eating and to implement changes not only for myself but for my family too."*

*"I learned something valuable from each class. My habits have changed in some areas, and I'm working on more."*

*"I enjoyed the 'Pick of the Week.' I really liked being exposed to fruits and veggies that I don't normally use."*

*"I changed what I eat right from the start of the program. The information I have now should impact the way I eat for months to come as I get more into a routine of healthy living."*

*"The course content covered many aspects of cancer survival, including a focus on healthier nutrition; the companionship of others dealing with cancer has been of lasting value."*

Figure 2. Samaritan Health Services *That's My Farmer* Post-Survey



PARTICIPANT ID: \_\_\_\_\_

WEEK #: \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for taking this survey to help us improve the *That's My Farmer* program. We will keep your answers confidential. Please ask your lead dietitian or volunteer if you have any questions and/or concerns about this survey.**

1. Over the past 7 days, how often did you eat vegetables?	Never <input type="checkbox"/>	1 time per day <input type="checkbox"/>	2 times per day <input type="checkbox"/>	3 times per day <input type="checkbox"/>	4 times per day <input type="checkbox"/>	5 or more times per day <input type="checkbox"/>
2. When you ate vegetables, how much did you usually eat per day?	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	Less than 1/2 cup <input type="checkbox"/>	1 cup <input type="checkbox"/>	2 cups <input type="checkbox"/>	More than 2 cups <input type="checkbox"/>	More than 3 cups <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Over the past 7 days, how often did you eat fruit?	Never <input type="checkbox"/>	1 time per day <input type="checkbox"/>	2 times per day <input type="checkbox"/>	3 times per day <input type="checkbox"/>	4 times per day <input type="checkbox"/>	5 or more times per day <input type="checkbox"/>
4. When you ate fruit, how much did you usually eat per day?	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	Less than 1/2 cup <input type="checkbox"/>	1 cup <input type="checkbox"/>	2 cups <input type="checkbox"/>	More than 2 cups <input type="checkbox"/>	More than 3 cups <input type="checkbox"/>
5. How confident are you with the following?		Extremely confident (I'm a pro)	Neutral (I'm ok)	Not confident (I need help)	I'm not sure	
Selecting fresh vegetables and fruit		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Storing fresh vegetables and fruit		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Preparing healthy meals		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Trying new things in the kitchen		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Eating healthy on a budget		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. How satisfied were you overall with <i>That's My Farmer's</i> ?		Very Satisfied <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat Satisfied <input type="checkbox"/>	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied <input type="checkbox"/>	Very Dissatisfied <input type="checkbox"/>	
7. To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements about this program?		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
The presenters were knowledgeable		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
The program materials were useful		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
The right amount of information was provided		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I would recommend this program		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Figure 2. Samaritan Health Services *That's My Farmer* Post-Survey (continued)



Your opinions matter to us. Please use the space below to explain any of your answers above.  
We also welcome your overall comments about this program. Thank you

8. What did you enjoy the most about the program?

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9. What are the pros and cons of the program?

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10. How has this program impacted you?

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The donor-funded Samaritan Pastega Regional Cancer Center in Corvallis, Ore., serves as the hub for the Samaritan Cancer Program, which offers satellite cancer care in four more locations across three counties.

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the pros and cons of the program and the impact on participants. Surveys from 2015 were administered more often and included questions on specific topics addressed in the educational modules. In 2016, surveys were reduced to the pre- and post-surveys and did not include the specific knowledge-based questions; this change was based on participant feedback.

**Data shows that *That's My Farmer* has improved the nutrition and wellness of the cancer survivors in the community. Each year we seek feedback from participants and use this information to improve the program.**

The 2016 survey data showed an increase in cancer survivors' confidence in eating healthy on a budget, preparing healthy meals, storing and selecting fruits and vegetables, and trying new things in the kitchen. The "extremely confident" option was the highest level of confidence on the survey (see Figure 3, right).

Confidence in selecting fresh produce in all three sites increased by 229 percent, storing fresh produce increased by 300 percent, preparing healthy meals by 200 percent, trying new things by 200 percent, and eating healthy on a budget increased by 260 percent. Overall this confidence increase is a positive change in the lives of local cancer survivors.

Program participants also increased their daily consumption of fruit. Figure 4, right, shows 2016 survey data on average fruit servings per day.

*That's My Farmer* also improved the average serving size of fruit and vegetables in all three locations. In all three cities combined, the average serving of fruit increased 124 percent, and the average serving of vegetables increased by 141 percent from the beginning of the program to the end.

### **The Future of the Program**

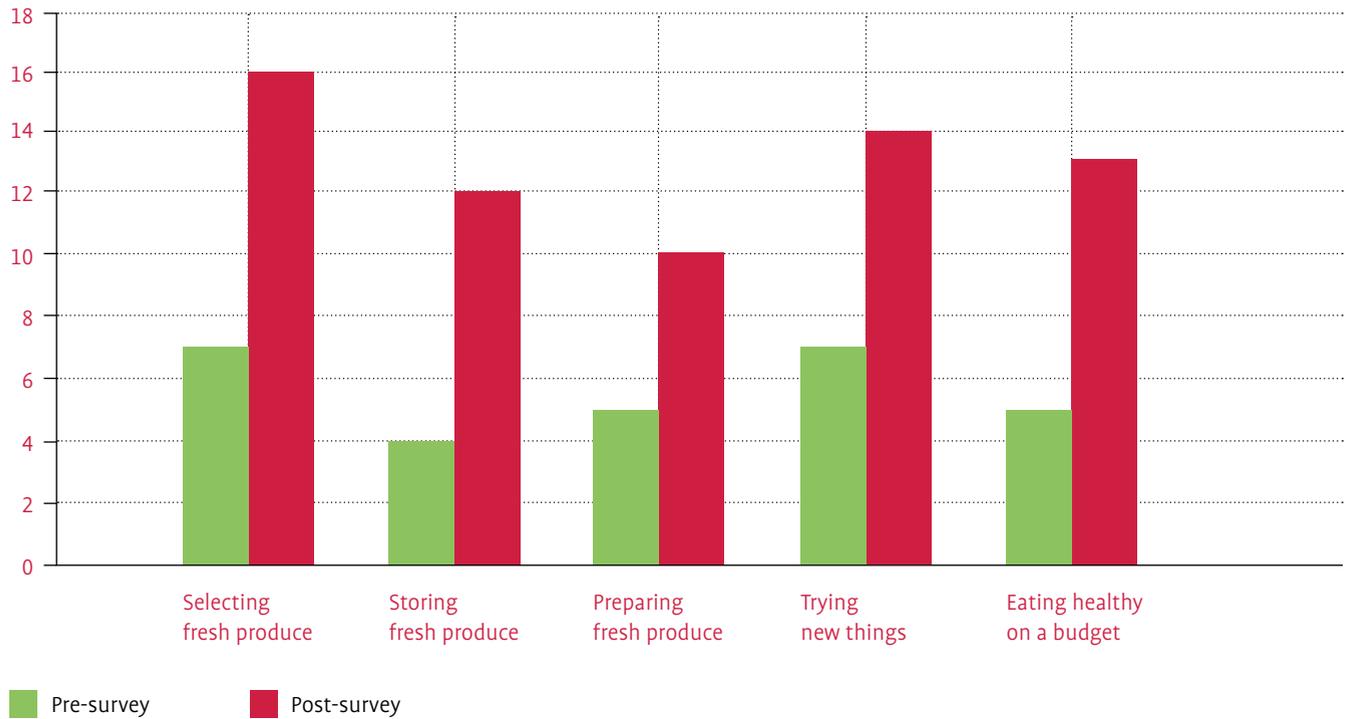
As more cancer survivors participate in *That's My Farmer*, more patients are being referred from oncology providers. Participants not only want the summer series but have expressed a desire for a winter series as well. They have enjoyed the cooking demonstrations and want more hands-on experience. Post-survey data shows that participants are highly satisfied with *That's My Farmer* and would recommend the program to other cancer survivors (see Figure 5, page 64). The majority of participants strongly agreed that the program provided the right amount of information for each class; the participant who disagreed with the statement said the information was too broad. The participants all agreed that the program materials were useful and the presenters were knowledgeable.

From the provider perspective, the three annual *That's My Farmer* sessions provide valuable opportunities for growth within the program and for the Samaritan Cancer Program as a whole. Not only does the *That's My Farmer* program have the full support of Samaritan Health Services and its providers and staff, the program has the support of local farmers and businesses in the surrounding community. Peoria Gardens, a local farm, provides each cancer survivor with plant starts that have included cucum-

(continued on page 64)

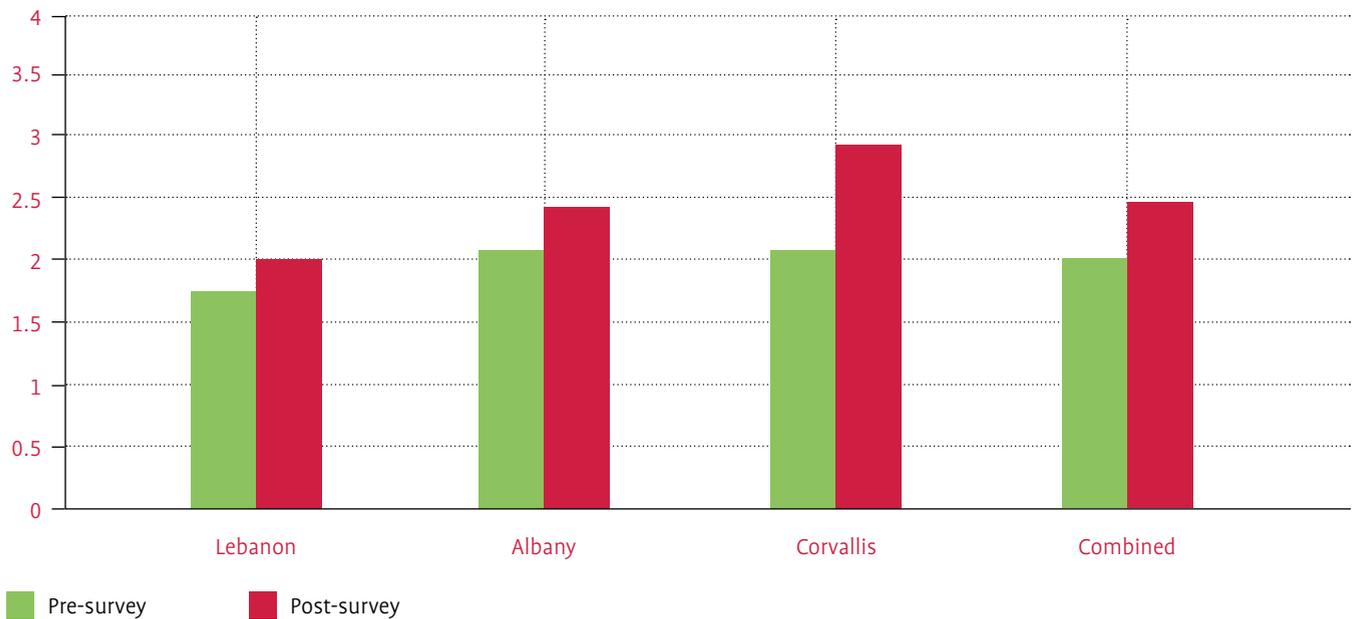
**Figure 3. 2016 Survey Data on the Number of Participants “Extremely Confident” in these Areas**

Extremely Confident (I'm a Pro)  
All Sites Combined



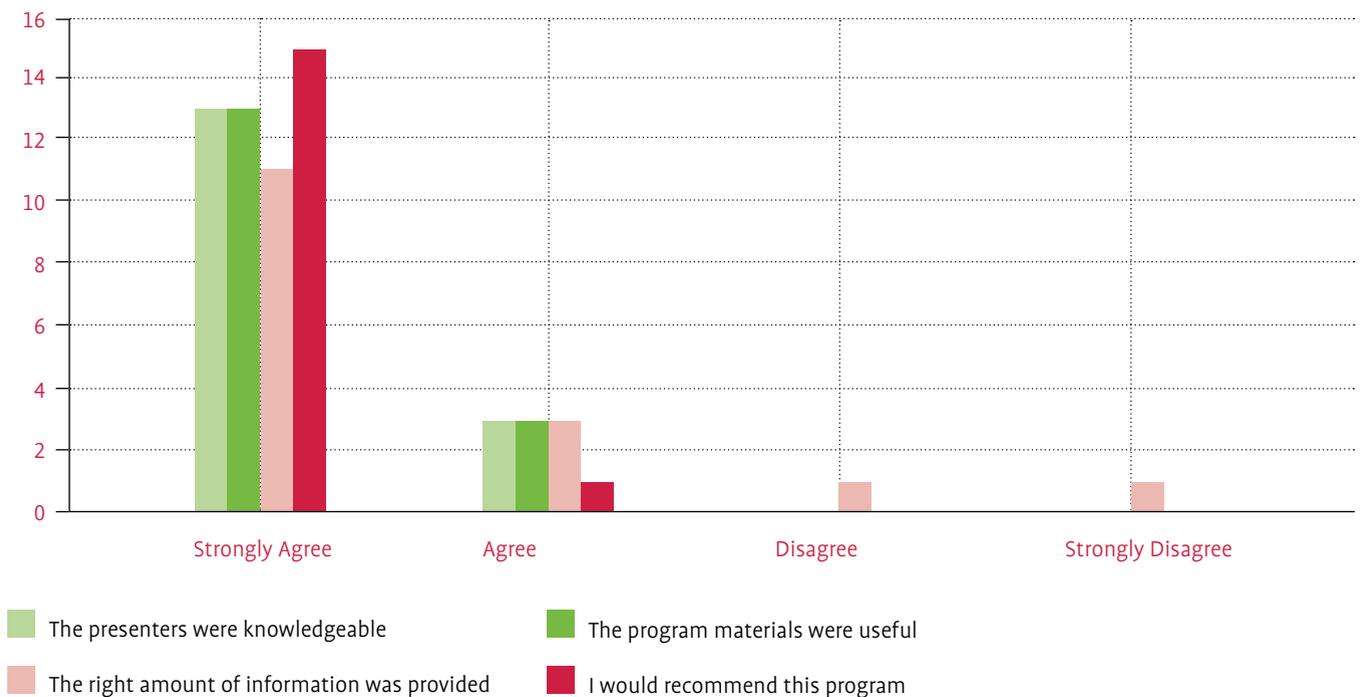
**Figure 4. 2016 Survey Data on Average Fruit Servings Per Day**

Average Fruit Servings Per Day



**Figure 5. 2016 *That's My Farmer* Post-Survey Data**

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements about this program?



(continued from page 62)

bers, tomatoes, zucchini, squash, peas, and others. Oregon State University (OSU) has been an advocate for the program. OSU Extension Service Master Gardner program, OSU Food Hero program, and The Moore Family Center for Whole Grain Foods, Nutrition and Preventive Health, have provided the participants with educational materials, recipes, and demos on canning and gardening at the farmers’ markets. Bob’s Red Mill and The Moore Family Center for Whole Grain Foods, Nutrition and Preventive Health donated grain samples to participants. Collaborative relationships have been a successful highlight of the team efforts especially between healthcare providers (e.g., registered dietitians, medical social workers, etc.), educational institutions, local businesses, and area farmers.

Data shows that *That’s My Farmer* has improved the nutrition and wellness of the cancer survivors in the community. Each year we seek feedback from participants and use this information to improve the program. According to the most recent 2016 surveys, the ideal program would be conducted over eight weeks, comprised of a mix of didactic teaching and group interaction, along with experiential learning on the part of participants.

Based on participant requests for follow-up, the 2016 *That’s My Farmer* team is working towards a two-week refresher series for 2016 past participants. The first week of the refresher series

will be feedback on the program and whether or not participants were able to keep up with the information obtained when they were enrolled in the longer class. This feedback will provide an opportunity to assess the impact of the program and to provide necessary encouragement to continue with healthy changes. The second week will be a food demonstration for a healthy holiday meal. The objective is to provide participants with time to reflect on the program and to share their *That’s My Farmer* experiences. The series would also include the same survey format given during the program; questions would be adjusted to account for the time spent away from the program.

Another area for growth is to expand the program to other locations within the Samaritan Cancer Program. We hope to expand to cancer programs located in our more geographically distant locations in 2017 so that cancer patients there may also benefit from *That’s My Farmer’s* life-changing education and support. 

*Abigail Muniz, RDN, LD, is a clinical dietitian; Athena Nofziger, RDN, LD, CHC, is a clinical dietitian; and Jean Schumer, PhD, LCSW, is a social worker for the Samaritan Cancer Program in Oregon. Maisa Athamneh is a master’s student at the University of Haifa International School in Israel. She served as a coordinator for the Samaritan Cancer Resource Centers in Oregon from 2015 to 2016.*