

Rooftop Garden provides lessons

By [Brianna Meyer](#)

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On Saturday, May 25, the Bloomington Community Farmers' Market hosted the Rooftop Garden at Middle Way House's second annual "Ready, Set, Grow!" event.

The event featured a maze of tables representing local organizations and a series of demonstrations.

Andrea Jobe, the Rooftop Garden coordinator, organized the event.

"The goal of the event is to bring like-minded people together to share knowledge and resources," Jobe said.

The event allowed the Rooftop Garden organizers to reach out to the Bloomington community.

"The garden not only provides fresh food to the shelter residents, but it also seeks to educate and empower the community to begin gardening," Jobe said.

In order to educate the community, the event gathered local experts willing to answer any gardening questions attendees had in addition to providing formal demonstrations of gardening techniques.

One of the most popular tables at the event featured the Pizza X Compost Project. Pizza X staff distributed a free compost bucket to all interested attendees. The small buckets contained a spray bottle to keep the compost mixture moist.

"We want to encourage recycling rather than promoting waste," Pizza



Malte Raff, age 3, accompanied by his mother Maren, plays with a chicken named Blaze at "Ready, Set, Grow!" Saturday at the Bloomington Community Farmers' Market. The event, sponsored by the Rooftop Garden at Middle Way House, aimed to prepare community members for the growing season and promote sustainability. [Rabi Abonour](#)

X employee Garrett Mintz said.

"The purpose of composting is to reduce household food waste that goes to landfills and promote soil fertility."

The demonstration portion of the event featured segments ranging from composting to container gardening.

The day's first presenter, Bobbi Boos of Nature's Crossroads, spoke about seed starting and transplanting. Nature's Crossroads markets and sells organic seeds that are adapted to local soil conditions.

"Some plants prefer direct seeding, while others do better with transplanting," Boos told the crowd.

The transplanting process involves first planting the seeds in plastic flats, allowing the plants to start growing before transplanting them into the ground. This speeds up the process and allows for an earlier harvest, Boos said.

Boos distributed planting calendars to her audience that recommended the best times to begin planting a variety of crops.

Another way to optimize growing conditions is through composting. Master composter Stephen Hale demonstrated how to begin composting at home.

Compost consists of greens and browns. The greens include anything nitrogen-rich like lawn trimmings and food waste, whereas the browns include anything carbon-rich like dried leaves and paper.

The key to making the best compost is to experiment with the ratio of greens to browns in order to find what works best in your garden. This process that may take years, Hale said.

The event wrapped up with a raffle of compost tea. The tea is created by steeping compost in water for several days. Useful for preventing the spread of disease in plants, compost tea is an excellent ingredient for starting a new garden.



Pizza X employee Garrett Mintz puts together a composting kit at "Ready, Set, Grow!" Saturday at the Bloomington Community Farmers' Market. The kits allow people to collect food waste inside before taking it to a larger compost bin. [Rabi Abonour](#) [Buy Photos](#)



Tomás Kavanagh explains his company, minifundia, at "Ready, Set, Grow!" Saturday at the Bloomington Community Farmers' Market. Minifundia builds and maintains vegetable gardens for clients in the Bloomington area. [Rabi Abonour](#) [Buy Photos](#)



A plant grows in a shoe at a table for Mother Hubbard's Cupboard at "Ready, Set, Grow!" Saturday at the Bloomington Community Farmers' Market. The event, sponsored by the Rooftop Garden at Middle Way House, aimed to prepare community members for the growing season and promote sustainability.

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Stephen Hale gives a demonstration on composting at "Ready, Set, Grow!" Saturday at the Bloomington Community Farmers' Market. The event, sponsored by the Rooftop Garden at Middle Way House, aimed to prepare community members for the growing season and promote sustainability.

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