

PRESS RELEASE
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East London school children raise the roof growing fresh vegetables!

A year of Food Discovery ends with a roof-top harvest feast for children at Hague Primary School

Year 3 children from Hague Primary School, Tower Hamlets celebrated the end of a year of Food Discovery with a fantastic harvest feast on the roof top playground of their school **on Friday 15th July 2016**. With the help of national education charity, The Country Trust, over the last year, the children have learnt to grow their own vegetables and herbs in raised vegetable beds, taste and explore new foods, cook simple nutritious meals and visited Tiptree farm in Essex, home of the famous jam. The feast was one of the highlights of the food discovery project with parents and carers invited to be the children's guests of honour and sample the food they had made.

This is the 6th year of The Country Trust's ground breaking Food Discovery project which has now run in over 40 urban schools across England. The Country Trust's aim is to bring food, farming and the countryside alive for those children least able to access it in a whole year of hands on discovery. Every child takes part in every activity, learning new skills, gaining confidence and experiencing exciting ways of learning outside of the classroom. Local farmers welcome children onto their farms, and local "Food Heroes" visit the schools to share their passion for food and farming.

The Food Discovery programme at Hague Primary School has been funded thanks to a grant from the City Bridge Trust. City Bridge Trust is London's biggest independent grant giver, making grants of £20 million a year to tackle disadvantage across the capital. It has awarded over 7,300 grants totalling more than £344,000,000 to organisations across the capital between since 1995. It helps achieve the Corporation's aim of changing the lives of hundreds of thousands of Londoners.

Judy Coles, head teacher at Hague Primary School said *'The children have really enjoyed learning about food and couldn't wait to pick the vegetables they had grown for the harvest feast. Working with The Country Trust has really helped the school enhance a key part of the curriculum as well as getting the children excited and interested in important life skills such as cooking and preparing tasty meals, and having first hand experiences of the working countryside.'*

Poppy Flint, Food Discovery Co-ordinator said *'It's been fantastic to see how the children's understanding about food has developed over the past year. All the children have learnt something new about the things they have seen and grown and they have been able to share this with their families. Many have gone on to cook recipes at home using ingredients they would not normally use which is brilliant and are learning first hand where food comes from both through hands on growing and unforgettable farm visits'*.

In preparation for the feast, the children harvested their own potatoes, courgettes, carrots and herbs in the morning. In the afternoon they made a range of dishes for themselves and their parents including potato salad, green salad and a broad-bean dip. All the children received a certificate to celebrate their success over the year.

If you would like to know more about the work of The Country Trust or become a supporter, please go to www.countrytrust.org.uk

-Ends-

Editors' notes

The harvest feast took place:

Date: Friday 15 July 2016 **Time:** 3pm

Hague Primary School, Wilmot St, London E2 0BP

For more information, please contact Phil Hesmondhalgh on phesmondhalgh@countrytrust.org.uk or call 01245 608363

About The Country Trust

- Founded in 1978, The Country Trust is the leading national educational charity that brings the working countryside alive for those children least able to access it, whether through disadvantage or disability. Every year we support hundreds of volunteer farmers and landowners to welcome thousands of disadvantaged children from all backgrounds and faiths onto their farms.
- The Country Trust has 3 main strands of activities:
 1. Farm Discovery - day visits to real working farms
 2. Countryside Discovery - residential visits to the countryside
 3. Food Discovery - yearlong programmes exploring every aspect of growing, cooking and even selling food
- The Country Trust focuses on working with the following:
 - Primary age children from schools with an above average percentage of children eligible for Free School Meals
 - Schools catering for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
 - Looked After Children and Pupil Referral Units
- In 2015 The Country Trust enabled
 - 17,961 children to go on a farm or estate visit
 - 6,600 children took part in farm led assemblies and food and farming workshops
 - 860 children took part in Food Discovery Programmes
 - 883 children went on 29 Residential visits
 - 415 children with Special Educational Needs took part in Countryside Adventure days in Hampshire.
- The Country Trust currently works with schools in and around London, East Anglia, Hampshire, Birmingham and the East and West Midlands, Yorkshire, the North West, North Wales and Northumberland.

What we do

- We make it easy and safe for children to visit farms and for farmers to share their knowledge and passion.
- We bring urban and rural communities together, increasing communication, respect and understanding of the countryside as a place of possibilities but also a place on which livelihoods depend.
- We facilitate children's cultural understanding about the life and work of the British countryside through visits and talking with those who live and work there.
- We enable children to experience the wonder of the countryside:- open space, breathing space, the people who live and work there, habitats, farm animals and wildlife.
- We enable children to understand the possibilities of food, what a variety there is, why and how it grows, who grows it and where, what it tastes like, why all this matters.
- We introduce adult role models who nurture and take responsibility for crops and animals. People who often work in strong family units.
- We bring two interdependent but disconnected communities together for a stronger future. Our school community includes many urban children and a significant number of children from ethnic minorities.
- We can help schools to meet the new Ofsted common inspection framework which now includes a judgement on 'personal development, behaviour and welfare'. Ofsted states that the first-hand experiences of learning outside the classroom can help to make subjects more vivid and interesting for pupils and enhance their understanding. It can also contribute significantly to pupils' personal, social and emotional development.

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