

CHRISTMAS WREATH-MAKING EXTRAVAGANZA FOR SUDBURY PUPILS

Usually in December, children from Tudor Church of England Primary School in Sudbury would be visiting Shimpling Park Farm near Bury St. Edmunds to make Christmas wreaths.

This year, of course, things are different and the visit, organised by educational charity The Country Trust, cannot go ahead. But determined that the children shouldn't miss out on their day at the farm, Country Trust coordinator Sarah Davey, decided to bring the farm to them!

This Country Trust initiative, known as Farm in a Box, was developed as a response to the Covid lockdown, when so many of the charity's educational visits to farms had to be cancelled. Every Farm in a Box experience is based on a real working farm and is designed to be delivered at school by teaching staff. Each box is filled with exciting resources for the children to explore. Activity cards and outdoor challenges enable them to make vital connections between their lives, their natural surroundings and farming. The programme has been rolled out all over the country this term, bringing farm and countryside education to hundreds of children, without them having to leave their school grounds.

So next Tuesday, rather than visiting Shimpling Park Farm to make their wreaths, around 120 Key Stage 1 children from Tudor Primary will spend the day making wreaths and table decorations for Christmas in their school playground.

The Deputy Head at Tudor Primary, Emma Ince said, "Our annual visit to Shimpling is a really special event in the school calendar and one that children, parents and staff look forward to all year round. We were so disappointed that we couldn't go this year, so when Sarah suggested using a Farm in a Box instead, we were thrilled!"

The day will begin with a video link with farmer Alice Pawsey, who will welcome the children to Shimpling and give them a virtual tour. Alice is providing the willow rings for the wreaths and most of the foliage but the children will also collect some greenery from the school grounds. At the end of the day, when the wreaths and table decorations are completed, the children will have a Zoom call with Alice to show her their work.

Alice told us, "I am so sad that we can't welcome the children to Shimpling this year. It really is one of the highlights of the year for me, so I was absolutely delighted when Sarah suggested we deliver them a 'Farm in a Box' instead. I am so looking forward to seeing the finished wreaths and to welcoming the children back to the farm, when rules allow!"

The Country Trust works with around 20,000 children and families every year across England and North Wales, focusing on those living in urban areas of higher than average disadvantage. As part of its educational programmes, the charity gives school children access to the countryside through residential trips and visits to real working farms, as well school-based cooking and growing sessions and their new programme Farm in a Box.

The Tudor Primary visit to Shimpling was covered in the EADT last year, so we thought you might like a follow-up story showing how the event has been adapted this year to make it viable. It promises to be a really feel-good festive piece – think small, pink-cheeked children in woolly hats and gloves, making Christmas wreaths outside...

Please let me know asap if you would like a reporter to attend so that the necessary photo permissions can be arranged. Alternatively, as with last year, I am happy to take photos and send them on to you.

To find out more about The Country Trust, please visit www.countrytrust.org.uk

Ends.

Editors' notes

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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 and Farm in a Box – our in-school farm experience
 2. Countryside Discovery - residential visits to the countryside
 3. Food Discovery - yearlong programmes exploring different aspects of growing, cooking and 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 and Nurture Groups
 - Looked After Children and Pupil Referral Units
 - Young carers, refugees and their families
- In 2018-19 The Country Trust enabled:
 - 19,528 children to go on a farm or estate visit
 - 1,575 children to take part in Food Discovery Programmes
 - 924 children to go on Residential visits
- The Country Trust currently works with schools in and around London, Essex, East Anglia, Hampshire, Kent, Sussex, 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- being outdoors, 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 education inspection framework which requires schools to demonstrate that they:

Give ‘all learners but particularly the most disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or high needs, the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life’; ‘support learners to develop their character – including their resilience, confidence and independence – and help them know how to keep physically and mentally healthy.’¹

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