



Pupils enjoy a healthy harvest festival

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By Tim Seamans, Communications Officer, South Sefton Primary Health Care Trust

More than 1,100 schoolchildren and parents across South Sefton in Liverpool have taken part in Harvest Festival celebrations with a healthy twist. Organised by local church communities in partnership with ten local schools, the children received the traditional messages of Harvest Festival – and learned about the health benefits of eating fruit and vegetables at the same time.

The link-up was supported by South Sefton Primary Care Trust (PCT) and Sefton Health Improvement Support Service's Eat 5 A Day the Sefton Way project. There were three events in total, the biggest of which was hosted by the Strand Shopping Centre where Marks and Spencer donated a free apple to everyone who went along.

Revd Roger Driver, Team Rector of the Bootle Team Ministry and a non-executive director of South Sefton PCT, explained: "The Harvest Festival is a chance for the whole community to celebrate some of the things we often take for granted. It was wonderful to see so many children and adults join together to give thanks for the great effort that goes into providing us all with food and drink throughout the year. Everyone has been so enthusiastic and it has been great to see a whole cross section of the community come together. It is the second year running we have linked the celebration with the 5 A Day message – it just seems like the perfect opportunity to help everyone involved learn more about the value of eating healthily."

Pupils used fruit and vegetables as the inspiration for works of art created to mark the occasion, which are now going on public display at the Strand. Youngsters from six of the schools had already taken part in Harvest Festival events held at St Andrew's Church and Our Lady Star of the Sea Church. They all learned about the value of eating fruit and veg in special classes run by the Eat 5 A Day the Sefton Way team.

Clare Furredge, 5 A Day Project Officer, explained: "It may be quite unusual but really it makes perfect sense to link up the messages of the Harvest Festival with those of the 5 A Day programme. The way our children eat will have a big impact on their health and this was a great opportunity to introduce them to lots of different types of fruit and veg in a fun and interesting way."

Kathy Sullivan, Head Teacher at St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School in Litherland, added: "It was a wonderful opportunity for the children and parents to come together as a community and say thank you for all that we receive. Encouraging healthy eating is also very important to the school and I am sure our pupils will have learnt some valuable messages about leading healthy, happy lives."

Editor's Note: These events took place during British Food Fortnight, and drew on harvest worship resources from the Arthur Rank Centre. What a wonderful way to celebrate harvest and bring the joys of healthy eating to children. We would be interested to hear of other initiatives and events like this.