

كلية طب وايل كورنيل في قطر Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar

Member of Qatar Foundation

Press Release

Trophy for green-fingered primary school students

Doha – May 19, 2015: Primary school students have been presented with a trophy after growing a bumper crop of fruit and vegetables and learning about healthy lifestyles as part of Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar's (WCMC-Q) greenhouse initiative.

The students of Somaiya Primary Independent School were awarded the trophy for growing the best fruit and vegetables and also for the creativity they showed in decorating their greenhouse, which was given to the school as part of WCMC-Q's Sahtak Awalan – Your Health First campaign.

The greenhouse initiative, delivered in partnership with the Supreme Education Council (SEC), has so far seen 40 elementary schools across Qatar receive free greenhouses, gardening tools, seeds, plant pots, compost and growing instructions. But it is constantly expanding and by the end of the year it is expected that about 70 schools will have the greenhouses. Eventually it is hoped that every independent school in Qatar will be included in the initiative. The scheme's vision is to teach young people about the environment, sustainability, where food comes from and the types of foods that they should eat to stay healthy. The aim is to halt the growth of diabetes and obesity and help create a healthy generation able to meet the needs of Qatar National Vision 2030.

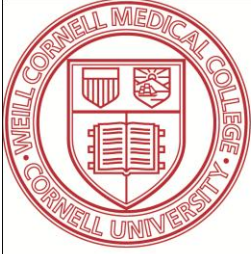
The Your Health First team visited the school to present the students with a trophy after their greenhouse was judged to have produced the best crop of all the schools in the scheme and to be the best decorated and maintained.

Shikha Nasser Alsahl, Director of Somaiya Primary Independent School, said: "We are very pleased with the students because they worked very hard and showed a lot of enthusiasm and creativity for the project. They have learnt the importance of eating healthy and natural food and how much better for their health it is than processed foods with artificial ingredients.

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“The greenhouse project complemented what they have been learning in science classes about healthy eating because they have seen in real life how nature provides healthy food for them. They loved seeing the food grow and they went out every day to look after their plants. They did very well.”

The students take pride in their greenhouse and have decorated it with plant pots and animal sculptures made from brightly painted recycled car tires. They have also put up hanging baskets and have been working together as a team to keep the greenhouse neat and tidy.

Grade 6 student Mayar Emad Nusair, aged 11, said: “We enjoyed learning about plants and how they can keep us healthy if we eat the right things. We also learned that plants give us life and that if we look after plants then we are helping to look after our planet.”

Fellow grade 6 student Hafsa Mohammed Tahir, aged 12, said: “Everyone knows that children like to eat fast food but we learned that fresh vegetables are actually really nice and that we need to eat them when we are young because we need the nutrition to grow. My family is really happy that I want to eat healthy food and they are helping me to do it.”

The students planted the seeds in September and tended them through the winter before harvesting them in February and taking them home to eat with their families. They have grown a wide variety of produce, including tomatoes, onions, cucumbers, eggplant, peppers, radishes, arugula, parsley, cilantro, and mint.

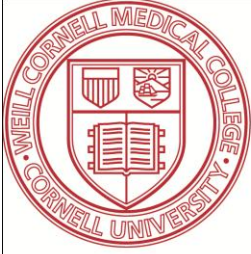
Nesreen Al-Rifai, Chief Communications Officer at WCMC-Q, said the greenhouse project was part of the wider Sahtak Awalan campaign to create a healthy generation for the future, free of diabetes and obesity, who can achieve the aims of Qatar National Vision 2030.

Mrs Al-Rifai said: “We want to educate young people about the importance of a healthy diet and exercise and teach them about sustainability and the environment. Through Sahtak Awalan and with the invaluable support and strategic partnership of Qatar Foundation, the Supreme

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Council of Health, the Supreme Education Council, ExxonMobil, Occidental Petroleum and Qatar Olympic Committee we are doing this. Together we are creating a healthy generation today, able to meet the challenges of tomorrow."

Hassan Al-Mohamedi, Manager of the SEC Communication and Information Office, said: "Through the greenhouse initiative students all over Qatar are learning extremely valuable lessons about the wonderful health benefits we can gain from eating fresh and healthy fruit and vegetables. This can have a very positive impact the health of young people in Qatar and protect them from the dangers of developing conditions such obesity and diabetes.

"The students of Somaiya School have done particularly well and I am very impressed by the dedication they have shown to caring for their plants, decorating their greenhouse and learning about healthy eating. They are very worthy winners."

Ahmed Salman Al Sheeb, Advisor at the Education Institute of the Supreme Education Council was also in attendance at the awards ceremony.

Second place winners Jawaan bin Jassim School said the greenhouse has been a valuable educational tool and that they were aiming for first place next year.

The school's Fatima Alnaeimi, who is responsible for the environment division, said: "We were very happy to have been chosen as one of the best schools in the Greenhouse Competition. We were second this year but we look forward to the first prize next year. The students enjoyed working in the greenhouse and learned how to cultivate plants and how to be healthy by eating fresh and organic vegetables. They shared some crop with their family and decided to grow their own vegetables at home."

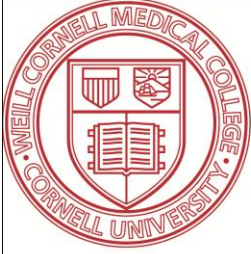
Dukhan Independent School for Boys were placed third.

Ashour Mohamed, Environment Club Coordinator the school, said: "We're happy with the third prize, and hopefully we'll get the first one next year. This initiative offered our students tremendous benefits especially for those children in the first, second and third grades. They learned how to grow different kinds of vegetables, fruits and herbs. They then took this

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initiative into their homes and enjoyed growing and eating fresh vegetables with their families.”

Sahtak Awalan – Your Health First was launched in 2012 in association with the Supreme Council of Health and in strategic partnership with Qatar Foundation, the Supreme Education Council, ExxonMobil, Occidental Petroleum and Qatar Olympic Committee. The five-year campaign aims to educate the whole population about how to improve their health, so helping the nation meet the targets of Qatar National Vision 2030.

- Ends -

Captions:

Photo 1: Ahmed Salman Al Sheeb, Advisor at the Education Institute of the Supreme Education Council; Hassan Al-Mohamedi, Manager of the SEC Communication and Information Office; and Shikha Nasser Alsahl, Director of Somaiya Primary Independent School with Grade 6 students Mayar Emad Nusair (left) and Hafsa Mohammed Tahir.

Photo 2: Green-fingered students of Somaiya Primary Independent School sit in front of their greenhouse.

About Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar

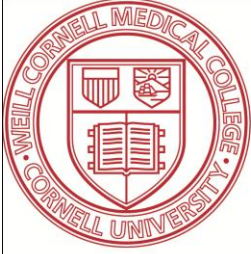
Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar is a partnership between Cornell University and Qatar Foundation. It offers pre-medical and medical courses leading to the Cornell University M.D. degree with teaching by Cornell and Weill Cornell faculty and by physicians at Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) and Aspetar Orthopedic and Sports Medicine Hospital who hold Weill Cornell appointments.

Through its biomedical research program, WCMC-Q is building a sustainable research community in Qatar while advancing basic science and clinical research. Through its medical college, WCMC-Q seeks to provide the finest education possible for medical students, to

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improve health care both now and for future generations, and to provide high quality health care to the Qatari population.

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