

Children learn to love healthy eating with Your Health First

Doha – May 6, 2017: A vast array of fruit and vegetables have been grown by children learning about health, nutrition, science and sustainability.

The students all took part in Project Greenhouse, an initiative from Will Cornell Medicine - Qatar's Sahtak Awalan – Your Health First campaign that is designed to teach children not only where their food comes from, but also the types of food they should be eating to stay healthy and to avoid diabetes and obesity when they are older. Each year the 101 schools that have received a greenhouse from Your Health First compete to see who has the best harvest.

The winners have now been announced, with Qatar Leadership Academy (QLA), member of Qatar Foundation for education, science and community development in Al Khor claiming first prize by not only producing a bumper harvest, but also incorporating the greenhouses into a multitude of different lessons and community projects. Umm Salal Ali Model Independent School for Boys came second, and Omar Ibn El Khatab Educational Center came third.

Ali Jassim Al Kuwari, Head of the Adult Education Section at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, presented the trophy for first place.

He said: "Project Greenhouse is a wonderful program for so many reasons and has proved a great success over the past five years. Firstly, it offers students the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities and learn lessons that are not always included in the mainstream curriculum; focusing on extra-curricular activities has proven to have great benefits for children's education. More than that, though, by educating our young people about health and nutrition at a young age, we can help create a healthy future generation, able to meet the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030."

Brigadier General Ali Ahmad Al Kuwari, Director of Qatar Leadership Academy, said having the greenhouses had allowed the students to put theoretical lessons learned in the classroom into practice in the real world.

Brig. Gen. Al Kuwari added: "Project Greenhouse has been a great success and by planting the seeds, nurturing the plants and finally harvesting and eating the crop it has given our cadets a very real sense of achievement.

"More broadly speaking, Project Greenhouse has also taught our cadets about the environment, sustainability and the importance of caring for the natural world. The students have learned skills that they will take with them throughout their lives, and knowledge that one day they can pass on to their children."

Fruit and vegetables grown by students at QLA include lettuce, parsley, tomatoes, chillis, eggplants and cilantro. They have also introduced mango trees and okra and even built an irrigation system to make watering the plants much easier. The next stage, said Sunny Joseph, science and technical coordinator



at the school, is for solar panels to be installed. Mr Joseph said it was hoped to connect these to fans which would allow the school to extend the growing season through the summer.

He added: “The QLA greenhouse project inspired us to grow and consume organic vegetables. The greenhouses proved to be a valuable resource for advancing not only the science curriculum but also other subject areas. Students completed nine scientific investigations across the middle and high school classes using the greenhouse as a base. Other schools have also shown an interest in using our greenhouse for their scientific experiments and I would like to thank our students for inspiring the community to take an active role in meeting their dietary needs.”

Mr Joseph said that QLA’s English department had used the greenhouses as inspiration for reflective writing, while the humanities department was planning a farmers’ market for the community. There are also plans for an environmental study center at Al Khor Park.

Mr Joseph said: “The greenhouses have opened up huge possibilities.”

Students at the school are now planning a pizza party, using the next crop of organic vegetables as toppings.

Abdulaziz Al Jabari, who is in Grade 7A, said he had learned a lot.

He said: “I have learned how to grow vegetables from seeds and how to take care of them. I also learned how to water the plants properly. I will try to plant organic vegetables in my garden so that I can eat delicious fruits and vegetables “

Fellow student Mohamed Al Essae said: "It is not hard to plant and grow vegetables in a greenhouse. I learned to recognize when to harvest green leafy vegetables and fruit.”

Ahmad Al Zeyara, who is also in Grade 7, had this message: “Grow organic vegetables in the greenhouse, if you want to eat vegetables that are fresh and not poisoned by chemicals. I will ask my friends and family to start a greenhouse at their homes.”

Nesreen Al-Rifai, chief communications officer at WCM-Q, praised the children and teachers all of the participating schools for their hard work.

Mrs Al-Rifai said: “Since its inception Project Greenhouse has proved to be a huge success, not only because it encourages children to eat and enjoy fruit and vegetables, but also because there has proved to be such a synergy with schools’ curriculums. As Qatar Leadership Academy have demonstrated so well this year, the greenhouses do not just teach children about cultivating plants and healthy diets. They can also be used in science lessons to teach children about humidity and temperature, math teachers can use them for lessons on measurements, geography students can learn about the effects of climate on crops, and, as QLA have shown, literature students can draw inspiration from the plants themselves.



“More than anything, though, we hope all the students at all our participating schools will take the lessons they have learned about healthy lifestyles with them throughout their lives. We want the next generation to be strong and healthy so they can continue to lead Qatar to success.”

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Photos Caption:

Photo1: Ali Jassim Al Kuwari, Head of the Adult Education Section at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, presents the trophy for first place to Brigadier General Ali Ahmad Al Kuwari, Director of Qatar Leadership Academy

Photo2: The Your Health First greenhouse at Qatar Leadership Academy

Photo3: Qatar Leadership Academy cadets have learned how to grow tomatoes and many other fruits and vegetables.

Photo4: The cadets of Qatar Leadership Academy are happy with their achievement

Photo5: The organic okra

About Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar

Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar is a partnership between Cornell University and Qatar Foundation. It offers a comprehensive six-year medical program leading to the Cornell University M.D. degree with teaching by Cornell and Weill Cornell faculty and by physicians at Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC), Aspetar Orthopedic and Sports Medicine Hospital, the Primary Health Care Corporation, the Feto Maternal Center, and the Sidra Medical and Research Center who hold Weill Cornell appointments. Through its biomedical research program, WCM-Q is building a sustainable research community in Qatar while advancing basic science and clinical research. Through its medical college, WCM-Q seeks to provide the finest education possible for medical students, to improve health care both now and for future generations, and to provide high quality health care to the Qatari population.

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