

Jay/Westfield Farm-to-School Program is at it again!



Pictured (left to right) Ryan Morse, Justin Berthiaume, Cody Brownfield, Jacob Ardine, Charlie Bevins, Samantha Gallet, Kortni Driver, Kendra Simpson. (Courtesy photos)

JAY — This fall, the Jay/Westfield Farm-to-School program began with much momentum. The school, as a part of the Green Mountain Farm-to-School network, is bringing fresh food to students, supporting local farms and providing nutrition and agriculture educational programs.

This year students in all classes are writing and visiting their local farms to learn more about where their food comes from and to connect to their local community.

On the school's most recent farm field trip, students visited Heath Orchards and were able to make a direct connection to the food they eat in the cafeteria. The 16-acre orchard, located in the rolling hills of Dufferin Heights near Stanstead, Que. has been family farmed for over 200 years.

Not only do they grow over 25 varieties of apples, but they also produce fresh pressed apple cider, local honey, maple products and grow a variety of vegetables. The Jay/Westfield School is now regularly purchasing apples to serve students in the cafeteria.

The farm field trip marked the beginning of this year's mentoring program at the school in which fifth and sixth-grade students are paired with first and second grade students for various team building activities. The students arrived wide-eyed and ready to begin picking, but this field trip was not just for the picking! There were educational sing-along-songs that the owner, Chris Rawlings, would sing with each activity.

Directly after picking the apples the students enjoyed a song about the life cycle of an apple tree and beneficial insects in the orchard.

Next, the students went to visit the cider press, where all of the different stages of pressing and the implements used were pointed out and described. Then, tying it all together was a song about pressing cider from apples. Students sang with great enthusiasm as they mimicked the process of pressing apples with

hands twisting and feet stomping! The students even tasted a cup of the orchard's fresh apple cider.

Once all of the bagged lunches were put away and the very sip of fresh cider was gone, it was off to explore the pumpkin patch! After all, it would not be appropriate to have a fall farm field trip and to not see some PUMPKINS! As all of the students scurried up the hill, they took notice of the apple trees as they passed.

"That apple is a cooking variety," a student stated pointing to one of the trees. "I like eating the cooking varieties," stated another student in response, "They are sourer!"

Once the pumpkin patch was reached, feet stepped over vines in haste to find the largest pumpkin. As the students surveyed each and every last one, they recounted all of the day's events.

"This is one of the best field trips ever!" stated second-grader Katie!

"I hope that I can come here again in fifth grade as a mentor," stated one of the first graders!

The field trip ended as all students boarded the bus that afternoon. However, the experience is going to be carried on into the classroom, where there will be in-class workshops tying together the field trip events and classroom curriculum. Using some of the apples from Heath Orchard, three stations will be set up. One as a taste test station, where three different varieties of apples from the orchard will be tasted, described, and then put through some blind taste tests! Second, a cooking station, where the students will create a dish that will be featured at their open house on Oct. 2. Lastly, the third station will be one where the life cycle of the apple tree is studied and diagrammed. Finally, lesson plans that will make a students' mouth water!

(Katherine Sims, Executive Director-Green Mountain Farm-to-School)



Pictured (left to right) Grant Meunier, Preston Judd, Rockie DaCostino, Monica Caffrey, Seth