

Southside Family Project and Bath City Farm - Family Feast Pizza Oven – June 2021



Organisation name: Southside Family Project and Bath City Farm

Project name: Family Feast Pizza Oven

Location: Bath, England

Grant amount: £9,920

Award date and duration: November 2018, 1 year

Project context: The Southside Project supports families in Bath and North East Somerset dealing with issues like physical disability, domestic abuse, sexual violence, substance abuse or long-term mental health problems. They have partnered with Bath City Farm on previous occasions as the Southside premises are very close to the farm.

Project aims: The project aims to bring together people from the local community to promote a healthy lifestyle.

Project aims

The aim of the project was to build a new pizza oven at Bath City Farm, which would be used as part of the Family Feasts Programme (run in partnership with the Southside Project). The programme aims to teach local families about growing and eating healthily and providing a place for local families to meet and make friends.

About the grant

The Southside Family Project received a grant from The National Lottery Community Fund to install a pizza oven on the grounds of the Bath City Farm, with the grant covering the costs of staff time for planning and building the oven and purchasing the materials needed. The oven was successfully built over the Easter weekend in 2019.

Project set up and delivery

The pizza oven was built to be used as part of the Farm's Family Feast programme, which brings together local families from deprived communities. Using the farm as a location for the Feast, **families can learn how to grow vegetables and feed animals** and **cook with the produce from the allotment on the farm**. Alongside teaching these skills, the events provided a place for local families to meet and interact with one another.

Penny, the CEO of the Southside Project, and Ann, a member of staff on the Family Feast programme, explained that local families and existing volunteers at the farm were consulted on the design and positioning of the pizza oven and were invited to take part in its actual build. Tasks for the build included laying a foundation, digging out the mud and forming it into bricks (this was carried out by children). There was a real community feel, with everyone getting stuck into building the oven: volunteers and children worked together assisted by a pizza oven specialist (hired using the grant from The Fund). Some of the materials for the build were donated by



the volunteers too, such as the wine bottles used as the insulation for the oven (as seen in the photograph).

The Family Feast programme ran every Wednesday before the pandemic, with between five and ten families attending each week. This pizza oven was used as part of the programme, around once a month.

The volunteers and families involved in the build of the pizza oven, along with those who have taken part in the Family Feast events, **viewed it as a very successful project**. Alan, one of the volunteers involved in building the oven, expressed how pleased he was to have been involved in the successful installation (based not least on the delicious pizzas they made) and felt positive about it being something that would be used by the community for years to come.

Joe, one of the group members who attended the Family Feast, described how the children loved making the pizzas with the support from the farm's staff, while parents appreciated the opportunity, while their children prepared and cooked the pizzas, to sit and have 'adult' conversations and get to know each other.

The families were keen to express **how fantastic the staff involved with the Family Feast programme** have been in providing a listening ear for parents as well as engaging well with the children when helping them on tasks around the farm. Ann, a member of staff at the farm, would buddy together confident parents with shy parents, to bring them out of their shells.

Project impact

Key highlights

Numbers supported

- 5-10 families attending the Family Feast project each week before the pandemic.

Key impacts

- Social connection for the local families
- New piece of equipment for the community to continue to use in the future
- New skills and knowledge for children, parents, and volunteers about a healthy lifestyle

Website

<http://south-side.org.uk/> <http://bathcityfarm.org.uk/>

People had more social contact

The project lead, Family Feast attendees and volunteers all agreed that the main benefit has been an increase in social contact between local families.

Ann called the Family Feast ‘Wonderful Wednesdays’, and something they looked forward to every week. It provided parents an opportunity to chat and share their problems. Catherine said she had more friends now because of their involvement in the Family Feast and they all kept in contact during the pandemic over Facebook. Alan, a volunteer, struggles with depression and other personal problems and felt the time spent at the farm building the oven and then

helping with the Family Feast events was a time when he was able to put to one side (temporarily) these personal issues and problems. It also helped him knowing there are people there he can talk to about his problems. The families who were involved in the Feast now organize activities themselves away from the farm.

Learning new skills

Through the construction of the pizza oven, those who volunteered learnt not only how to build a pizza oven, but improved their **team building skills and problem solving**. Alan, one of the volunteers, felt the initial design was not

quite right in terms of the measurements. Ann, the manager, took on his ideas and Alan also took his own initiative and added on some extra design work with different coloured bricks and edging stones. It felt that it was a collaborative project between the staff and the volunteers, and that their ideas and input was welcome in the construction.

Another participant, Sue, felt her involvement in the project had led to changes in her lifestyle, namely preparing more home-cooked foods, trying new recipes, and growing her own fruit and vegetables.

“A bigger friendship circle ... sitting around the pizza oven with the warmth during the cold ... it was nice to feel that support from the group.” **Catherine, a beneficiary**

“If [a member of staff] saw me struggling at the Family Feast, she would come and help me ... see if they could distract him [my son] ... support me ... they wasn't judging me if [my son] was having a bad day ... it took his mind off his bad day at school” **Catherine, a beneficiary**

“Everyone that came and looked at it [the completed pizza oven] said it was brilliant, and I was able to give myself a pat on the back... I was proud of myself.” **Alan, volunteer**

“Now we've moved to a new house and we have a garden, we have set up a little veg patch and we are growing sweet peas and strawberries. I'm not sure we would have done that if we hadn't been to the feasts.” **Sue, a beneficiary**

A positive asset for the community

The grant has given the farm an asset which serves the local community – it is used for its own weekly Family Feast programme, but has also been used by other groups (free of charge) such as Mentoring Plus, Voices, Youth Connect and Age UK).

Overall reflections

The oven was more costly to build than Penny had initially anticipated, however the donations of materials (e.g. the wine bottles for insulation) offset this issue. With hindsight, the team thought they could have placed the oven in a more sheltered place, and there are now plans to add a shelter so it can be used year-round in the future.

The new pizza oven has been an **exciting and welcome new aspect** to the Family Feast programme for all involved. The construction of the pizza oven itself had a positive impact on those who were involved, giving them a sense of pride and accomplishment at what they had built. The Family Feast programme were successfully able to use the pizza oven to showcase ways in which families could use the produce they had grown on the farm to **prepare healthy meals**. The Family Feast programme provides **a sense of community** for local families: parents have a place to feel supported by others, and both parents/children can learn new skills in a safe environment. Attendees to the Family Feast spoke about missing the programme during the pandemic and hope they will be able to continue to attend and use the pizza oven when it is possible again in the future.

The **relationship** between Southside and the Farm has grown closer, and both organisations feel as if the objectives of teaching local people about growing and eating healthy foods have been achieved. It was also felt that through the increased social interaction, some attendees had improved mental health and wellbeing (volunteers and attendees to the pizza oven build and the Feast themselves spoke about their pride in their work and the benefits of meeting new people).

About the case study

As part of this case study, IFF Research spoke to Penny, the CEO of the Southside Family Project, Chris* (the manager at the Bath City Farm), Ann* (the group worker), Alan* (volunteer at the farm) and Sue*, Joe* and Catherine* (attendees at the Family Feast).

**Names have been changed*