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the land, they're likely to keep it open."

The land trust, founded in 1987, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving undeveloped land in East Windsor, Ellington, Enfield and Somers.

The danger of development, Grant said, is that it leads naturally to more development. In time, farms and forests can be squeezed out by the "domino effect — or I could call it the 'condomino' effect," he said.

Marion Webber of East Windsor, who brought her 4-year-old granddaughter, Joanna Destrow, on the tour, was already a believer. She said she was raised on a chicken

farm in Massachusetts.

"So much of our land is now being gobbled up," she said. "If we don't preserve [open space] now there won't be any left for our children to enjoy."

At Applebrook Farm, Tom Muska poured ice water for the visitors and told them how he gets as many as eight bushels of apples from some of his trees. "We do have really rich soil here, and I think that helps with the production," he said.

"This is some of the most fertile soil in the world," added his wife, "and we don't want to see it paved over."

Albert and Donna Grant's farm on Melrose Road and the Collins Powder Hill Farm in Enfield were also part of the tour.



■ April Nicotera, 1, and her mother, Lin Murphy Nicotera, of East Granby, relax under an apple tree on a farm in East Windsor during a tour Sunday sponsored by the Four Town Land Trust.

Patrick Flynn / Special to The Courant

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## Residents visit four area farms

### Tour given to inspire regard for open space

By PAUL MARKS  
Courant Staff Writer

EAST WINDSOR — They wouldn't be worth a picked-over wishbone on a Thanksgiving table, but Tex Mulnite's hybrid peafowl provided a colorful start to Sunday's farm tour sponsored by the Four Town Land Trust.

"They're a cousin to a turkey — the same food, same diseases as a turkey — but they're all bony," Mulnite told a crowd of onlookers as he stalked through the screened-in cages trying to calm the excitable birds, which leaped and flapped in vain attempts to fly.

That doesn't mean the exotic

birds aren't profitable, he hastened to add. To breeders, a pair of the multicolored hybrids raised at Roaring Brook Game Farm is worth between \$300 and \$475.

"Some of them have real tall feathers the size of me!" marveled 10-year-old Jeff Baillargeon of Suffield.

To his neighbor, Mark Kozloski, 9, the bright spots on the birds' tail feathers looked "like a lot of furry eyes." The two friends were among several youngsters who left the Mulnite farm clutching a handful of gaudy feathers.

It was one of the more unusual faces of agriculture viewed by about 70 people — at least half of them children — who boarded a yellow Enfield Public Schools bus and spent the afternoon touring four farms in East Windsor and Enfield.

As the bus rolled along the back roads to Tom and Sharon Muska's apple orchards, the scenery was typical of summer in north-central Connecticut: the cornstalks shoulder-high, tobacco leaves waving like elephant ears in the intermittent breeze. Along the roadside, thick stands of Queen Anne's lace were blooming.

The problem, said land trust President George M. Grant, is that other things are blossoming in the fertile farmlands of the Connecticut River valley: stop signs, shopping strips and condominium complexes.

"We arranged this tour to raise awareness of agriculture and open space as they relate to each other," he explained. "Obviously, if someone is getting productive use out of