



# Plowing Forward

## April 2026

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### From Red Dye #40 to Beet Powder: A Small Change with a Big Lesson

If you've purchased strawberry milk at the Dairy Store recently, you may have noticed something a little different. The color. Our strawberry milk is now tinted with **red beet powder rather than Red Dye #40**, giving it a softer, more natural pink hue while keeping the same delicious, creamy flavor you expect. When we shared this change on social media, most customers responded with enthusiasm. A few also asked an important question:



**“Why were you using Red Dye #40 in the first place?”**  
It's a fair question—and one worth exploring.

#### **What Is Red Dye #40?**

Red Dye #40 (also called **Allura Red AC**) is one of the most widely used food colorings in the United States. It is approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and has been used safely in food products for decades.

You'll find it in **hundreds—if not thousands—of products**, including:

- Fruit-flavored drinks
- Candy and gummies
- Breakfast cereals
- Snack foods
- Yogurts and desserts
- Sports drinks
- Baked goods
- Ice cream and frozen treats
- Hygiene products
- Cough medicine
- Cosmetics
- Crayons, pens, markers

Manufacturers use food colorings because **we often “taste with our eyes.”** A strawberry-flavored product that looks gray or beige would feel strange to most consumers—even if the flavor were identical. Color helps signal flavor.

#### **Why Hillside Made the Switch:**

At Hillside Farms, we continually look for opportunities to improve the ingredients used in the products we make and sell. When our supplier recently began offering **powdered red beet as a natural coloring option**, we made the decision to switch. The result is the same creamy strawberry flavor with naturally derived color. It's a change we're proud of.

#### **Why Ingredient Choices Often Depend on Suppliers:**

One important reality of small-scale food production is that **farms rely on ingredient suppliers**. We don't manufacture every component ourselves. Instead, we source ingredients—from flavorings to stabilizers to colorings—from companies that specialize in producing food-grade ingredients. When suppliers offer new or improved options, we evaluate them carefully. When a **better choice becomes available**, we adopt it whenever possible. This is exactly what happened with our strawberry milk.

#### **Food Labels Matter:**

Red Dye #40 is still widely used across the food industry. That means the responsibility for making food choices ultimately belongs to **all of us as consumers**. The good news is that ingredient lists make this relatively easy.

If Red Dye #40—or any ingredient—is something you prefer to avoid, simply look for it on the label. You'll often see Red Dye listed as: **Red 40, FD&C Red No. 40, or Allura Red AC**. Reading labels is one of the most powerful tools consumers have for making informed choices.

#### **Our Commitment:**

At Hillside Farms, our goal is always to provide **high-quality, thoughtful food products** while continuing to learn and improve. Thoughtful food choices begin on the farm, continue with our suppliers, and ultimately rest with all of us who gather around the table. Sometimes progress comes in big steps. Sometimes it comes in small ones—like switching from synthetic coloring to beet powder. Either way, we believe in moving forward. And we're grateful to our customers for caring enough to ask questions along the way.

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## **Lights, Camera ... Hillside!**

### **A Student Documentary Captures the Heart and Future of the Farm**

Recently, The Lands at Hillside Farms became both classroom and canvas. Through an exciting collaboration with **Wilkes University**, students in a Documentary Production course—led by Professor Mark Stine—have taken on an ambitious and meaningful project: to tell the story of Hillside Farms in a way that honors its past, celebrates its present, and looks boldly toward its future.

Spending time across the farm, these students immersed themselves in the rhythms of daily life at Hillside—filming in our pastures, barns, and educational spaces, and capturing the natural beauty that so many of us cherish. Along the way, they conducted on-camera interviews with individuals who help bring the farm to life each day, including team members from production, education, administration, the dairy barn, and development and marketing.

But this project goes far beyond a visual tour.

The documentary explores the deeper story of Hillside—tracing its rich history, highlighting its commitment to sustainability, and examining the role the farm plays in the lives of those it serves. Just as importantly, it reflects on the relationship between Hillside and the broader community, asking a powerful question: *What does this farm mean—to all of us?* With a planned length of 30–50 minutes, this student-produced film offers a thoughtful, fresh perspective—one shaped by curiosity, creativity, and a genuine appreciation for Hillside’s mission. And perhaps most special of all ...

We are honored to share that this documentary will be showcased during our **20th Anniversary Celebration Dinner** on **Saturday, October 10, 2026**, in our historic Museum Barn.

As we gather to celebrate two decades of education, preservation, and sustainability, this film will serve as both a reflection and a reminder—of where we’ve been, what we’ve built together, and the bright path ahead. To Professor Stine, Dan Mattern, Director/Chief Engineer Communication Studies, and students: Thank you for helping tell the Hillside story—through your lens, and for generations to come.

**Pictured below from left to right are a few of the documentary stars: Troy Pensak, Dairy Farm Manager, The Hillside Dairy Herd, and John Shorts, Plant Manager.**



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## The Luzerne Foundation Youth Advisory Committee Young Hands, Big Impact.

We were fortunate to welcome some students from the Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) of The Luzerne Foundation, who were up bright and early on a Saturday morning volunteering at the farm. Their day began with rakes, gloves, and plenty of energy as they worked across from the Dairy Store — an area that serves as a first impression and focal point for many of our customers and visitors. Thanks to their hard work, the space looks beautiful and ready to welcome the community for the busy season ahead.

But the morning was about more than raking and cleaning. It was about community service, teamwork, and learning at a young age why helping others matters. When young people give their time and energy to improve a place that serves the community, they are also helping build something much bigger — a culture of service, responsibility, and pride in their community.

A special thank you to Guy Kroll, Director of Volunteers, for coordinating the morning and sharing the history and mission of Hillside Farms with the students. We are incredibly proud of these young volunteers and grateful for the time, effort, and positive spirit they brought to the farm. To learn more about The Luzerne Foundation, please click [here](#).

Good things happen when young people show up ready to help.

Pictured below are student volunteers that made a BIG difference at the farm. From left to right: Ainsley Slacktish, Michael Connolly, Gracie Coyne, Benjamin Neher,\*\* and Ella Aritz.

**\*\*While Benjamin Neher initially came to the farm to complete his community service hours, he spent the morning working right alongside the YAC, proving that service is not just about hours completed, but about showing up, working hard, and helping where help is needed.**



## Winner Winner Celebration Dinner!

Our 20th Anniversary Celebration Dinner promises to be a night to remember! The food, location, entertainment, and overall vibe will be over-the-top fabulous. Celebrating 20 years as a non-profit educational dairy farm is a big deal - having YOU there will make it even better. Click [here](#) to learn about the two-decades-in-the-making gathering honoring the life and legacy of Hillside's Founder and Visionary, Dr. Doug Ayers.

## 2026 Calendar of Events

**May 16**  
Noon – 2:00PM  
Gentle Sheep Shearing  
Location: Coach Barn

**June 6**

11:00AM – 1:00PM  
Celebrate Dairy Day  
Location: Coach Barn

**August 7 – August 8**

10:00AM – 5:00PM  
Historic Camp at Spring Brook Farm  
Location: Spring Brook Farm

**October 3 & October 4**

Noon - 5:00PM  
24<sup>th</sup> Connecticut Militia Regiment & Camp  
Location: Behind Hillside's Historic Greenhouse

**October 10**

5:30PM - 8:30PM  
Hillside's 20th Anniversary Celebration Dinner  
Location: Museum Barn

**December 4, 5, & 6**

December 4 6:00PM – 8:00PM  
December 5 & 6 4:00PM – 6:00PM  
Christmas in the Barns  
Location: Coach Barn

To learn more about these family-focused farm events, please [click here](#).



**The Lands at Hillside Farms  
is proud to earn  
The Gold Standard in Animal  
Welfare for Dairy Cattle**



[agreenworld.org](http://agreenworld.org)

The Lands at Hillside Farms is a historic, 434-acre, 501(c)(3) non-profit educational dairy farm EIN 20-2975553. Our mission is to teach life choices that are healthy, logical, and sustainable so those born 200 years from now will have access to the same or better resources and opportunities.

You can contribute to our non-profit mission by visiting  
**our online donation page.**

**We are grateful for your support.**  
**[TheLandsatHillsideFarms.org](http://TheLandsatHillsideFarms.org)**



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