

21st Century Fund for HVRHS

25 Years of Supporting Student & Teacher Aspirations



From Foreign Adventures to Team Competitions, Engaged Learning Makes a Difference!

Since 1994 the 21st Century Fund has given money to students and teachers to make their educational visions a reality. From cultural trips abroad to adventures within Region One; from seed money for robotics, envirothon and electric car teams to individuals striving to broaden their experiences. Whatever their goals, your donations and support have made them achievable.

Usually we fill our newsletters with stories about how the **21st Century Fund** impacts HVRHS students and teachers by making possible opportunities they might not otherwise have, and how this enriches their experiences and growth.

In this issue we want to tell you about a program and group of students at the high school that exemplify what we most value – innovation, dedication to a higher purpose, team work, leadership, and service to the community. I am speaking of the Agricultural Program, which has been a vital part of HVRHS since 1939. Not only does it provide an outstanding education in farming practices, it also teaches our students how to work together to keep this vital part of our local economy thriving. I hope you will find their story as inspiring as we do.

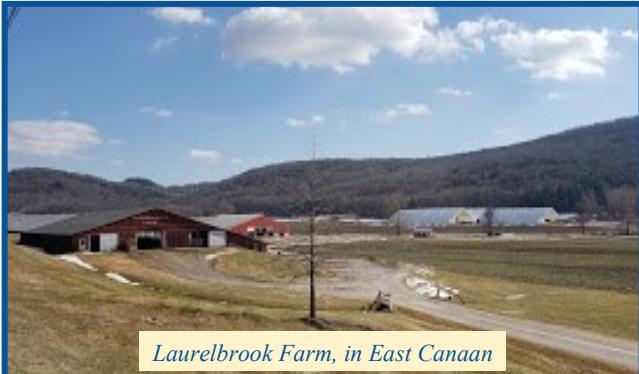
We are very grateful for your support over the years and invite you to look inside at the list of this year's donors.

David Bayersdorfer, Chair, **21st Century Fund for HVRHS**

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Enrichment, Innovation, Community & Fun

Why Our Farms Matter



Laurelbrook Farm, in East Canaan

This is a story about a dream and a tradition, and about keeping them both alive. It's a story of pride and self-reliance. It's also a story of long hours and dirty hands and hard work. It's a story about Northwest Connecticut and the dairy farmers who have been the backbone of its economy for generations. It's the story of a little boy who got up with his dad at 1:30 in the morning and clambered on top of a crate so he could milk the cows. It's a story about a fourteen-year-old girl who got the surprise gift of a calf for Christmas

and knew in that moment that her life's work had begun. It's a story about the agricultural program at Housatonic Valley Regional High that enables these farm-raised students to work together for the common purpose of sustaining local agriculture. (About one in three of the school's students are currently enrolled in its Ag Program.) That way the farming life will be there for their kids and their kids' kids as well.

One of them is Colby Jacquier, whose great-grandparents started Laurelbrook Farm in East Canaan not long after World War II, and whose father, James ("Cricket"), taught him to love milking cows. Colby's now a sophomore, vice president of the local FFA chapter, on the cusp of becoming an old hand at this way of life, proud about what three generations of his family have accomplished, yet mindful of how his farm will have to adapt to remain profitable. It now sprawls over 2,500 acres and houses 1,100 dairy cows, producing 100,000 pounds of milk a day (along with 25,000 pounds of commercially sold manure). Milking has changed a lot over the decades: now machines do it, three times a day, and electronic devices strapped to the cows' fetlocks record how far each has walked so workers can monitor their health. Instead of dozens of employees, Laurelbrook can now operate efficiently with only five at a time. But even with such a reduced labor force, dairy farming faces economic challenges.

In the 1960s, there were about 140 dairy farms in Litchfield County; now there are only about fifteen. During this time, much farmland has been converted to other purposes, such as solar-power production. Costs have gone up: having to remove phosphorus from the soil is one example. Furthermore, many families here and around the country have switched from drinking cow's milk to soy and almond varieties. Local residents don't fully appreciate what dairy farms and dairy products mean to Northwest Connecticut. A big part of the farmers' job nowadays is to get the word out.



Colby Jacquier (far right), with other members of his family, on their farm.

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Maggie Baldwin, a senior, president of the local FFA chapter, and the daughter of dairy farmers, realizes how vital this communication is. Since being given her Brown Swiss heifer "Peaches" in 2015, she's spent a lot of time breeding and raising her own herd of dairy cows (now numbering six), but also using the public-speaking and leadership skills which all FFA students learn to promote dairy farming. Over the past four years, she has taken part in annual "Ag Day" gatherings in Washington, D.C. and last year attended -- along with five other HVRHS Ag students -- the national FFA convention in Indianapolis. (Maggie also participated in a summer exchange program, on a farm in Nebraska.) To raise funds for these outreach activities, she and her fellow students mount an annual holiday sale, featuring Christmas trees, wreaths, maple syrup, cheese, and other locally made items. This past year it brought in \$74,000. After Maggie earns an associate's degree in agricultural business, she plans to return to Falls Village and open a store for farm supplies, but also to carry on her work of making residents and weekenders more aware of locally produced food. She just can't imagine any other way of life.



Maggie Baldwin with one of her dairy cows

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Thank you. YOU make everything we do possible!

Sounding Off in the STC

When the Mahoney-Hewat Science and Technology Center (STC) began in the 1990s, it was the product of a massive community collaboration led by the **21st Century Fund**. The **Fund** spearheaded the campaign to raise the money to pay for the restoration, rallied an army of volunteers and secured material donations. The vision, inspired by Jack Mahoney, was to build a space which inspired hands-on learning and creative thinking. This became a reality in 2014, when the HVRHS robotics team began building and testing their robots there, and the “artgarage” offered students an after-hours drop in studio space. *(Photo of the robotics team at a competition is on page 1.)*



More recently, acting on recommendations from a student steering committee, and with funds and materials again raised and donated from the community, a gaming room and recording studio opened with a variety of games (computer and board), Do-It-Yourself (DIY) kits, computers, musical instruments, recording equipment as well as a sound-proof studio. The STC is open during the school day and by appointment. Thanks to the generosity of William Perotti and Sons, the space has been air-conditioned and is also used for summer programming.

Photo: Students setting up the new guitar and key board purchased with a grant from The Marion Wm. & Alice Edwards Fund, a fund of the Northwest CT Community Foundation. Drums were purchased with a grant from the 21st Century Fund for HVRHS.



4-8th Graders, HVRHS Student & Adult Mentors, and reps from local non-profits came together to develop mobile apps for good causes.

Code-for-a-Cause

On March 9th, the **21st Century Fund for HVRHS** and **Salisbury Bank** hosted a Random Hacks of Kindness, Jr. Hackathon in the Mahoney-Hewat SciTech Center. The goal of the full-day workshop was to engage students in using technology for social good. The event was free to all Region 1 students in fourth - eighth grade; no prior coding experience was necessary.

Participants were divided into four-member teams, each with a high-school mentor and local non-profit; the participating organizations were the 21st Century Fund, Beckley Furnace, Housatonic Youth Service Bureau, NW CT Arts Council, Salisbury Rotary Club, and Sharon Historical Society. Each team worked together to identify and develop a mobile app that would assist their non-profit. The day ended with students presenting their non-profit’s mission, and the app they worked on, to an audience of parents and peers. A win-win for all!

Interested in learning more about the Fund, its initiatives or in supporting us?

Contact us at 21centuryfund@gmail.com or visit www.21stcenturyfund.net