

Tiffany Farm Report
by Emily Lerner

As many of you are aware, the financial situation of Tiffany Farm threatens its continued existence. The potential loss of Tiffany Farm has galvanized many residents to offer support to the farm, because they understand the value that the farm gives to the town of Lyme. Many of those values directly contribute to and overlap with the work of the Lyme Land Conservation Trust to preserve open space and the water and land resources of Lyme and to maintain the quality of life in our town.

The threat to the viability of Tiffany Farm is created in large part by social and economic factors that affect dairy farms in the Northeast. Fixed government pricing of milk, rising energy and grain prices and the lower costs of huge industrial dairies have combined to create a situation in which Connecticut dairy farmers in 2006 spent an average of \$1.55 to produce a gallon of milk, while only receiving on average the federally-fixed minimum of \$1.14 (quoted from Bonnie Burr, recent expert presenter at the Lyme Public Hall's talk: "The Future of Connecticut Dairy Farms").

The majority of the land of Tiffany Farm is protected from subdivision and development through the Agricultural Preservation Restriction, a program in which the state has purchased the development rights from the farm. This action by the Tiffany family has ensured that most of the farm's land will remain as open space, but the state does not guarantee that the farmers will be able to afford to continue to farm. What would happen to Tiffany Farm without any farmers to maintain it? Part of the viability of Tiffany Farm rests in the upcoming generation; Jack and Sue are very fortunate to have a daughter and a son-in-law, Hannah and Dave Schillawski, and a son, John Tiffany, who are invested in working the land in the future.

The working landscape and scenic beauty of Tiffany Farm make me feel thankful as I drive past them. For all of us, and especially our children, the value of being able to pet the cows, to witness a working farm, to see where milk, cheese and ice cream come from is so important to our understanding of food and agriculture. In Lyme, we are lucky to still have working farms near at hand.

The farmers of Tiffany Farm also support open space preservation in Lyme through their extensive efforts in keeping lands clear, including many acres managed by the LLCT or privately owned. They make hay and grow corn on hundreds of acres in the town of Lyme. Without the work of Tiffany Farm, the LLCT would accrue great expense and/or effort to keep open the portion of our holdings that are in field.

Maintaining these fields keeps these lands from reverting to forest; the presence of these fields increases the diversity and health of our natural resources in Lyme. Many animal species, including many birds and plant species, require open space for reproduction and foraging. People love to have wide-open vistas to view and move through as they experience the natural world. Open farmland also helps to control local flooding and recharges aquifers.

The LLCT has joined with other non-profit organizations: the Lyme Public Hall and the Pleasant Valley Association, and interested individuals, to form a Consortia Committee to aid the continuation of Tiffany Farm. The Consortia has helped coordinate donations to Tiffany Farm (at this time all monies needed to off-set short-term debt have been donated; the long-term debt and financial stability of the farm remain to be addressed). The Consortia is interested in the needs of the other farmers in Lyme, recognizing the many values that these farms and their farmers give to our local community. The LPH and the Lyme Art Association are sponsoring a Paint-out to raise funds for Tiffany Farm; artists will paint views of Tiffany Farm from Sat, 6/2 through Wed, 6/6. A sale of the paintings will open with a reception at the LPH on Fri, 6/8 and continue through Sun, 6/10. If you are interested in participating as an artist, volunteering or donating art to be sold, please contact Angie Falstrom at 434-3194 or jfalstrom@comcast.net, subject "Tiffany Paint-Out."