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**LOCAL DOCTOR GUIDES DAIRY COOPERATIVE, HUDSON VALLEY FRESH,
PRESERVES 5,000 ACRES OF OPEN LAND IN DUCTCHESS COUNTY**

--In the 1970s, there were 275 dairies in Dutchess County, the highest number of dairy farms in New York State -- and now there only 26.

--Hudson Valley Fresh dairy cooperative farms are currently preserving 5,000 acres of open land. Now that's sustainable agriculture!

Pleasant Valley, New York, September 1, 2008 – Back in 2004, **Hudson Valley Fresh** was just a gleam in Dr. Sam Simon's eye. Now the dairy cooperative is preserving 5,000 acres of open farmland, providing farmer members a stable income, boosting the local economy AND producing premium quality milk.

Dairy farming is a habit that Sam just couldn't shake. Growing up on a 200-acre dairy family farm in Middletown, New York, Sam learned at an early age what thriving family farms means to a local economy and landscape. It means that the land is preserved from development, the farmers have a sustainable income, and the food they produce is fresher and healthier for the local community. That's why when Dr. Sam Simon "retired" from a successful 22-year practice as an orthopedic surgeon in Poughkeepsie, New York, he went

right back to dairy farming, purchasing and rehabilitating the 150-acre Plankenhorn Farm in Pleasant Valley, New York.

Sam quickly discovered that dairy farming is not what it used to be. Ever-increasing fuel costs coupled with unnaturally low global commodity prices has brought the price of milk way below production costs. Many farmers were forced to sell their valuable farmland to developers. (Today, only 26 dairies remain in Dutchess County, while in the 1970s there were 275.) Knowing first-hand the challenges that family dairy farmers face every day, he and former Assemblyman Patrick Manning founded Hudson Valley Fresh (HVF), a non-profit dairy cooperative dedicated to sustainable agriculture. They sell premium quality cow's milk - whole, skim, low-fat and chocolate - in the Hudson Valley, New York City and Long Island.

There are currently half a dozen partnering farms in the HVF cooperative including Plankenhorn, Coon Brothers, Shenandoah, and Marshall/Bos Haven. Hudson Valley Fresh takes pride in the high quality of its milk and requires all of its dairy farmers to comply with the strictest guidelines regarding freshness and quality, well beyond New York State's standards. For example, at HVF farms, somatic cell counts (SCC), which monitor the health of the herd and individual cows, average 150,000 cells per milliliter -- HVF's production code mandates that farms must have less than 200,000 cells per ml to remain in the cooperative -- while most industrial and organic dairy farms have an average of 420,000 cells per milliliter for pooled milk. The federal government standard is 750,000 cells per milliliter. In addition to the rigorous milk and cow testing, Hudson Valley Fresh cows are never treated with artificial hormones like recombinant bovine somatotropin (rBST) or recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH). It is due to high standards like these that Hudson Valley Fresh farms are

often recognized for the superiority of their milk, winning awards like the *National Dairy Quality Award* and the *New York State Environmental Stewardship Award*. In addition, Hudson Valley Fresh milk is just that—fresh-- as it travels from the cow to the store in less than 36 hours.

Sam stays in this business because, as he says, “someone needs to be an advocate for these family dairy farmers. Many coops treat milk as just a commodity but we take a lot of pride in the quality of our product and the fact that we’re also helping to preserve the beauty of the local landscape -- and we believe that makes us noteworthy. All milk is not created equal.”

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Hudson Valley Fresh is a non-profit dairy cooperative – and dedicated to showcasing our proud agricultural heritage in the Hudson River Valley, promoting us as the premier food region that we are, and producing a living wage for our farmers and their families. For more information, please visit: www.hudsonvalleyfresh.com