

From Kelley Corporate to ORGANIC FARMER

THE STORY OF HOW A LOCAL
BLOOMINGTON FARMER
CAME TO BE

PHOTOS AND STORY BY
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The sun is setting on a warm September afternoon as you bite into a juicy peach while listening to a relaxing guitar. Welcome to an afternoon at the Tuesday Bloomington Community Farmer's Market. Bloomington, Indiana is most well known as the home of Indiana University. This welcoming college town nestled in southwest Indiana is dominated by the university in all of its grandeur and constant activity. But what people forget about most are the other thousands of nonstudent residents who live in Bloomington for more than just the school. Bloomington is home to a diverse compilation of arts and culture through its museums, festivals, music, theaters, and weekly events that bring together people of all backgrounds. One such event that embodies the true essence of Bloomington is the biweekly Farmers Market. The Bloomington Community Farmers Market features local vendors, farmers, craftsmen, and artists whose products illustrate the spirit of Bloomington in its natural, pleasant environment.

The Living Roots Ecovillage Farm & CSA is a local, organic farm that is based in French Lick, Indiana. Living Roots has been an active vendor at the Bloomington Market for thirteen years.





GROWN LOCALLY

One such vendor of the Farmers Market is The Living Roots Ecovillage Farm and CSA. A CSA is a "Community-Supported Agriculture" group that connects the consumer to the producer of the food so that the producer maintains transparency in his work. The Living Roots Farm is a local farm based in French Lick, Indiana that sells organic meats and produce. Every Tuesday and Saturday, the farm visits the Bloomington Community Farmers Market to sell their goods to the community. At the Saturday market, they are most well-known for their "Pepper Mountain" as they stack hundreds of sweet bell and Italian peppers on top of one another in the middle of their stand to attract visitors with their brightly colored vegetables.

The Living Roots Farm was founded and is now owned and operated by Michael Hicks. Michael has been running the farm for thirteen years alongside his wife, Alina, and his bright, enthusiastic son, Leo. In the technology obsessed, high-speed pace of today's world, farming was not his initial path. Right after high school, Michael attended the US Air Force Academy. After two long years at the Academy, he decided to switch paths and pursue a traditional business degree. He transferred to Indiana University Bloomington where he graduated with honors in the Kelley School of Business with a degree in Accounting and Finance. Just like the rest of the Kelley students, he worked long, hard hours wrapped up in the stress of Corporate America. After two

years of spread sheets, fluorescent lighting, and a suit and tie every day, Michael decided that life was not for him. When describing his work life, he said, "Corporate America just wasn't for me. I needed something out of the ordinary, so I decided to travel the world instead."

After abandoning his depressing job at the accounting firm, Michael set off into the world for deep self-exploration. He traveled to forty different countries including his favorites, India and Tibet. His enthusiasm and love for life was sparked on his excursions as he learned about various cultures and ways of life by getting in touch with not only himself but the people and land around him. He shifted his life to center around meditation and awareness that led him to feel deep

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connections to the earth below him. This connection allowed him to truly see the beauty of the environment, but he also became aware of the destructive tendencies of humans around him. He was immediately inspired by the needs of the environment and decided to become active in societal changes needed to enact these changes. He was heavily involved in environmental volunteer work in the United States including working for Outward Bound, which is a non-profit experiential learning organization for kids that fosters personal growth and social skills through outdoor expeditions.

All of these diverse experiences encouraged Michael to start his own organic farm, the Living Roots Farm. At the farm, their mission is to be active in their community and make a meaningful difference in the world around them. Michael and the Living Roots family is a group of individuals who are excited about discovering innovative ways to live, grow, and eat sustainably. Their central goal through their work on the farm is to create a better future for themselves, their communities, and their planet. One member of the Living Roots family is a professor at Indiana University, Michael Montesano. Montesano works alongside Hicks at the Tuesday market as an employee to the Living Roots Farm. Montesano was inspired by Hicks' passion and wanted to be a part of a community that values sustainability and finding happiness in the outdoors the same as he does.

This dynamic of the farm is immensely different from the competitive, routine lifestyle that Michael had as an accountant. Michael's inspirations have led him to become a farmer and says that, "I truly am thriving, and I love it." By following a unique path, he has found what truly makes him happy, and he has come to the Bloomington Community Farmers Market to share it with his community.



Pictured on the left, Michael Hicks smiles proudly for the camera at his produce stand. Hicks is the founder, owner, and operator of The Living Roots Farm.



Living Roots Farm sells organic vegetables and meats at the Tuesday market. They work at both the Tuesday and Saturday Markets on a weekly basis.

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LIVING ROOTS FARM