

Big news from your Farmers: Barb and David are retiring from 24 years of CSA farming. There is a lot to say, but to summarize, it has been great! This season marks our last CSA harvest.

Barb's Thoughts: It's you, the members, who have made all 24 years worth it! Farming is hard, but knowing who eats the food we grow has kept me going. The people element of CSA is what sets it apart from other types of farming. Hundreds of members with no prior farm experience have found their way to this farm and actively participated as worker shares. Thousands of members have attended farm festivals and tomato u-picks, making a connection with the farm. Many members have opened their homes as pick up sites. I know this farm has positively impacted many people's lives. We turned a tired old dairy farm into a vibrant community farm. We took a huge risk. We did what we felt was right and did it in a way that best resonated with who we are and what our values are. I can retire from my active life as a CSA farmer knowing I have made a difference. Thank you everyone! I am honored to have been your farmer.

David's Thoughts: It was with a great deal of risk, challenge, excitement and anticipation that it all began in 1994. My personal history is Wisconsin agriculture, and for me the CSA model was so intriguing from a farmer's perspective, I just had to try it. CSA turns traditional agriculture on its head in almost every way: the farmer and member share the risk and the bounty; the farmer sets the price, the product and the delivery schedule; the members fund annual operating expenses by paying in advance; the Farm connection is real. Our farm goals were never pounds per acre or artificial food aesthetics, but instead flavor, diversity and healthfulness. We put a great deal of effort into giving members the opportunity to visit the farm because the connection to your farm is so important to us. We have farmed with organic practices, diverse crop rotations, experimented with new ideas and have been mindful of farming's impact on the earth. The response we have gotten from our members for all 24 years has been awesome. The stories many of you have shared with us have inspired us and kept us going. Vegetable farming is hard physical work, but you have made it worth it. Your financial support has allowed us as a business to succeed. Our entire family has chosen to be part of this farm which itself speaks volumes of what community agriculture offers. We have fostered many new CSA farmers over the years and helped establish CSA as mainstream. For me, Vermont Valley Community Farm has been a smashing success in every way. I am thankful for all the support we have received over our 24 years.

Are the "kids" taking over? Our family has decided to pursue new adventures in life. Our son Jesse will continue farming but not as a CSA farmer. He, with David's help, is going to continue our organic seed potato business. Jesse's wife, Jonnah, is deepening her involvement in the outdoor industry as a trail running coach, freelance writer and is working on several media projects. Our son Eric, who is very happy farming, is having some significant back issues and has decided he needs to pursue a new career that is not as hard on the body as vegetable farming. Our daughter Becky, who was our farm cook, moved to Colorado this summer. Although the Perkins family has spent many years working together growing vegetables, the time has come for a change; it has been a special time for all of us.

What we ask of you: Please join another CSA next year. We feel very strongly that the success you have given us needs to be continued and shared with other farmers. CSA is the BEST way to support local organic agriculture. Your new CSA will be different; there is only one Vermont Valley Community Farm; but different is good because each farm is a reflection of its farmers. Enjoy the harvest from your new CSA farm. The Fairshare CSA Coalition website lists many CSA farms to choose from.

We would love to hear your stories and experiences with this farm: Each of you has had your own special experience with this farm. We have gotten to know so many of you and feel incredibly connected to you, our members, our farm family. We have saved every handwritten note we have received over the years. We would love a collection of memories, stories, sentences, anything you care to put in writing to capture your experience with Vermont Valley Community Farm. Send your thoughts to barb@vermontvalley.com.

Thanks!!

Barb and David