



## first Person

CSA Programs Expand Food Options in Adams County | BY JAYNE SHORD

I grew up on my family's farm outside of Pittsburgh in a small community called Plum Boro. From my early years, I was always interested in growing things and spent much of my youth creating gardens in my family's yard.

My little red wagon was my trustworthy vehicle for hauling stones from the quarry to make stone planters around our house and carrying vegetables from the garden into town to sell to our neighbors. If you were to fast forward 40-plus years you would find me selling produce on the square at the Gettysburg Farmers Markets. I now live in a stone house with many gardens, and I'm still growing vegetables to feed my neighbors!

I've always been a late bloomer, so much of my life has not evolved according to the conventional time frame. In 1999 I graduated from Allegheny College in Meadville, Pa., with a bachelor of arts in environmental studies and a focus on sustainable agriculture. Following graduation I was employed at Wilson College in their Center for Sustainable Living.

Involvement with their community supported agriculture (CSA) program as an intern, my role as the director for their CSA Resource Center, and involvement with the organization of farmers markets in Chambersburg, Pa., and Shippensburg, Pa., have helped lead me to where I am today.

When my husband and I purchased our farm on Mount Carmel Road, Orrtanna in 2001, the gardens and CSA at Beech Springs Farm were a natural

evolution. The farm's organically-grown produce was sold at the Gettysburg Farmers Market and to area restaurants for six years, and in 2011, we made the transition to a CSA.

CSA programs are not new. The concept has been around for many years. While there is some controversy over where CSA originated, it was influenced by the ideas of Rudolf Steiner, an Austrian philosopher, and was first introduced to the U.S. in Massachusetts in 1985. When I was involved with the CSA at Wilson College in 1999, the concept was still relatively young and the numbers were small, but over the years it has grown exponentially. In 2014, the USDA estimated there were nearly 13,000 CSAs in the U.S.

The CSA model has been a boon to farmers because they are able to sell direct to members of the community, which eliminates the middle man and much of the burden of marketing. When community members purchase a share of the farm's produce at the beginning of the season, the farmer is provided with operating capital at the beginning of the year before crops are ready for market. Farmers and members enter into a partnership, which helps ensure financial security for the farmer. The members share farming's risks, as well as its rewards.

This will be the fifth year for our CSA, and I am really looking forward to the 2015 season. I'm especially excited because we have expanded our program to include products from other Adams County farms,



which gives our members an expanded array of local food choices. For the first time, members will have the opportunity to purchase chicken, fruit, eggs, cheese, and shiitake mushrooms grown in Adams County through our CSA program.

My husband and I are blessed to be the stewards of this beautiful farm and love to share it with others. As the CSA has expanded, other opportunities have evolved. Over the past few years we have begun to share the farm and its bounty by hosting weddings, garden parties, teas, barn dances, and other special events for the community. From childhood, gardening has been in my blood, and Beech Springs Farm and our CSA program are the culmination. 

*Jayne Shord and her husband, William, are the owners of Beech Springs Farm, Orrtanna. For more information on the CSA or to schedule a special event, contact [beechspringsfarm@comcast.net](mailto:beechspringsfarm@comcast.net) or 717-642-5695. Additional information can be found at [www.beechspringsfarm.com](http://www.beechspringsfarm.com) or the farm's Facebook page.*