

BUSINESS PARTNERS

By Cheryl Tevis, Risk Management Editor



trees, decor and pies.

PLENTY OF WORK TO GO AROUND

Work begins in the greenhouses in February. The farm stand opens in April.

Wayne germinates tomatoes and peppers, getting them off to a good start before transplanting. He and Scott handle field operations. “More than half of our produce is direct-seeded,” Scott says.

Daryl manages the business records and payroll. She transplants flowers, and creates about 500 custom pots each summer.

“She’s up at 6 a.m. working in the office, and then she’s on the go outside,” Scott says.

Amanda, a Spanish teacher, helps manage the CSA, school

trips, farmers markets, and the web site. Kristin, also a teacher, is in charge of media and produces an e-newsletter for 200 customers.

Jaime manages the farmers markets, produce inventory, and co-manages the CSA boxes. She hires and schedules 45 seasonal employees.

“Our employees are part of our team,” Scott says. “We all help each other out.” He also manages the bakery.

They stay in touch with customers using Instagram at <https://twitter.com/WindyAcresFS> and their Facebook page.

Soon after the season winds down, the Srails plan to build a new greenhouse. “We continue to update,” Daryl says. “The farm is our family’s future.”  

LOCAL FARE IS FAMILY AFFAIR THEIR BUSINESS IS BASED ON A LOVE OF FARMING AND CULTIVATING CUSTOMER LOYALTY.

Geneva, Illinois, was a sleepy small town one hour west of Chicago when Wayne Srail was growing up in nearby Lisle. He began selling produce in the parking lot of his parents’ business when he was 18 years old. In 1978, one of his customers got much more than she bargained for when she stopped to buy geraniums for her mom.

“He asked if I knew anyone looking for a job,” Daryl Srail says. Not long after she started work there, they began dating. They married in 1981, and in 1985, bought a farm with three greenhouses in Geneva. They called it Windy Acres Farm. “Farming is a great way to raise a family – living off the land and being a source of good food in the community,” Wayne says.

Today it’s the only working family farm in the Geneva area.

The Srails spent many years selling produce to wholesalers and small grocers. As suburbs grew to surround them on three sides, they focused on their farm produce stand, as well as growing and selling annual and perennial flowers.

Today their children, Amanda, 31, Kristin, 29, Jaime, 27, and Scott, 25, all work in the business. Jaime and Scott are full time. “We all were born into the business, and grew up knowing firsthand how it works,” Kristin says.

Their spring fare features favorites ranging from peas to rhubarb, asparagus, Swiss chard, kohlrabi, and strawberries.

Windy Acres Farm is renown for its sweet corn and tomatoes. The fields yield bushels of melons, cabbage, beets, green beans,

brussels sprouts, eggplants, peppers, broccoli and red, yellow and green onions.

“We grow about any vegetable you can name,” Scott says. “We pick it daily. Everything is sold fresh.”

The Srails sell at farmers markets in Wheaton, Lisle, Downer’s Grove, Burr Ridge, Glen Ellyn, Sycamore, Oswego, Geneva, Naperville, and Elgin.

In 2010 they added a Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) business.

They host 2,500 students during their Fall Festival, featuring pumpkins, mums, apple cider donuts, cider, a corn stalk maze, and petting zoo. Two years ago, they opened a bakery on site.

Their season extends through Christmas, with