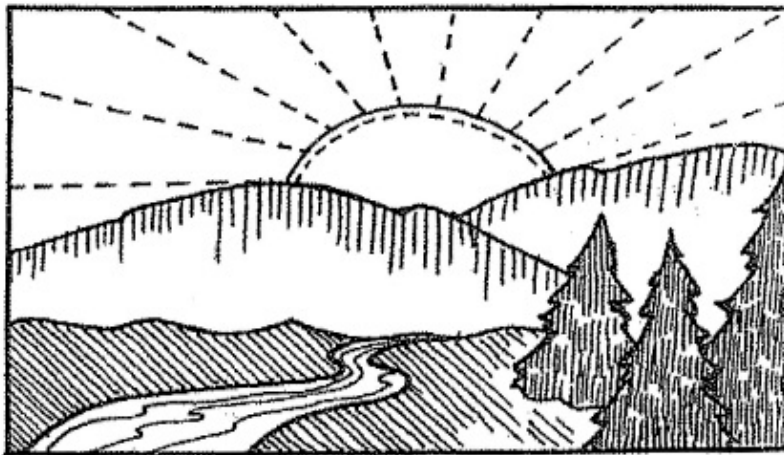


## Finding Organic Food in 1991

"SHARING KNOWLEDGE FOR BETTER HEALTH"

CENTRAL INDIANA  
**HEAL**  
HUMAN ECOLOGY  
ACTION LEAGUE



**How one family had to start their own food business to get organic food for their sick child, since organic food was so difficult to find.**

*Keywords: environmental illness, chemical sensitivity, MCS, organic food, history*

The following is from the March/April 1991 issue of the Central Indiana HEAL newsletter. The last name of the family has been altered for privacy. The town of Kokomo is 53 miles (85 km) north of the Indiana capital of Indianapolis and 150 miles (240 km) from Chicago. It has a university and in 1990 the population was about 45,000

### **Central Indiana H.E.A.L. Meeting January 20, 1991**

The January 20 Central Indiana H.E.A.L. meeting was held at Northwood Christian Church in Indianapolis. The featured speaker was Wayne Walker, who,

along with his wife Dixie, runs Midwest Organics in Kokomo. The business, which opened in July, 1989, offers certified organic foods.

Wayne explained a bit of the background of how Midwest Organics began. When Dixie was pregnant, she suffered a heart attack. When the baby was born 13 years ago, they figured he had to be "hard as nails" to have gotten that far, and they named him Spike. Four years ago, Dixie and Spike were injured in an auto accident. Dixie was suffering with chest pains, and Spike began to exhibit symptoms that were diagnosed as Tourette's Syndrome. His doctor prescribed Haldol, which caused many serious side effects, including suicidal thoughts. The Walkers took Spike to a clinical ecologist in Norwalk, Connecticut, where allergy problems were diagnosed. Spike was found to be particularly sensitive to pesticides and fertilizers. It was imperative that he eat all organically grown foods.

Wayne had always gardened without pesticides, but getting a varied diet of organic foods was a real problem. He would sometimes drive 200 miles to get food that he later learned wasn't really organic. This led to an ongoing search for truly pure food for his son, as well as for friends who wanted to eat more healthily. Spike was still having many problems, especially with the bug sprays used in school. Once an active youngster, he was shunned by his fellow classmates. But gradually, as he stayed on organic foods, his health began to improve. Though other holistic medical techniques have helped, Wayne feels that eating organically has been the major contributor to his son's improvement. Because he wanted to keep helping Spike and many others with similar problems, Wayne said he and Dixie decided to open Midwest Organics, a warehouse which stocks bulk items and fresh produce of all kinds.

The Walkers are very particular about what they sell. If it is not certified organically grown, they won't even consider it. For instance, many of his products come from farmers in Shipshewana. Since Indiana does not have an organic certification program, Wayne goes out to look at the farm, talks with the farmer, then gets a third party to certify that no pesticides or chemical fertilizers have been used. When the food comes from other states, which have enacted organic certification laws, he requires affidavits certifying the products. Midwest Organics is a food culture "melting pot", with bananas and coconuts from Mexico, grains from Idaho and Nebraska, and various items from California. He often buys from organic food brokers in order to buy smaller amounts, and makes sure that they are very trustworthy.

Although many items arrive by truck, Wayne still drives countless miles in search of pure food. He said he has yet to find a truly organic apple in Michigan; those billed as "ecological", he says, are not organic. Not only does he drive many tiring miles, but he deals with personality problems along the way, as well. And Wayne gave examples of how difficult it is to deal with most commercial stores. He has sold supermarkets quality produce that they don't even bother to label

"organic". In other cases, where items were labeled as organic, he has known them to substitute commercially grown produce and sell it as organic after running out of the organic item. They also commonly overprice the items, which is discouraging to those who truly need pure food to stay healthy. Midwest Organics primarily sells to food co-ops and some stores. Interestingly, Wayne said he sells mostly to people who want to eat organically rather than those who must. Yet the reason they are staying in business is to help those who have no other way to get such food. Because his business is so unpredictable, Wayne said he is glad he works at another job, for Honeywell Protection Services. Dixie also works, yet they manage to put in many dedicated hours toward their organic warehouse.

Wayne is concerned about Midwest Organics' future. The recent freeze in California has raised produce prices, plus the cost of gasoline is up. Because business is unpredictable from week to week, waste is unavoidable. Some wilting vegetables find their way to the local rescue mission, but not all can be salvaged. Although Midwest Organics works mainly with co-ops, they welcome business from individuals as well. The warehouse is open from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. every Thursday, although the Walkers can arrange to meet individuals there by appointment. They deliver to many areas of Indiana, with a \$10 free if the order is under \$200.

Concerned H.E.A.L. members discussed ideas on how to help the company stay in business to provide this much needed service. Wayne mentioned that he can bring individual orders to the Northwood Christian Church every other Wednesday when he delivers his order to the Circle City Co-op. Ray Funk suggested that a H.E.A.L. member who is both willing and able could form a co-op by receiving a bulk order and breaking it up for individuals, which is very time consuming for Wayne. Call Ray if interested.

Midwest Organics is located at 1310 S. Elizabeth in Kokomo. The phone number is, which will reach the Walkers' home when the warehouse is not open.

### **Other historic stories**

See [www.eiwellspring.org/history.html](http://www.eiwellspring.org/history.html)