

## THE SWEET LIFE

By Kinjal Dagli Shah

Melanie Holmes and Sandy Griffiths gave up their corporate jobs and a downtown lifestyle to move to a 65-acre farm on Stouffville Road. In tow were their two children, seven-year-old Molly and five-year-old Max.

"My husband had a sales job he wasn't in love with. I was working in commercial real estate. He has always had a green thumb and we would say that one day, we were going to try and grow hops, one of the three ingredients that go into beer," said Melanie.

Two years ago, the couple decided that the "one day" had arrived, and they moved to Stouffville.

"It had been a couple of years since Sandy was commuting back and forth trying to make something of the land. Once we moved, we decided Meadow Sweet would be a full-time occupation," she explained.

"Of the 65 acres, we've devoted one acre to hops, two acres to our greenhouses and four acres for heirloom vegetables. Part of the land is also where we raise heritage breed pork and grass-fed beef, as well as chicken. We also have 15 beehives so we make some honey as well. It is all certified organic, but our main line of business is the baby leaf salad greens with five premium blends of salads."

Moving from St. Clair to Stouffville, the family did experience a bit of a "culture shock" in the beginning.

"Our daughter was so excited that she would get to ride on a school bus.

And my son thinks it's cool to be able to pick his own dinner, so he collects all our chicken eggs. But we did have some transitioning to do. We have a round patch in the garden that we call a pizza garden. We divided it into pizza pieces and each kid plants a pizza topping that they get to grow and eat," said Melanie.

The couple also has a farm stand in the summer and came up with an idea called Meadow Sweet Mondays.

"Every Monday, we would invite a different restaurant and a chef to come up to our farm for a tasting tour. They could then go and pick the herbs they liked and make dinner for us outside," she said, adding that the farm supplies a lot of salad to stores like the Village Grocer as well as restaurants.

They also run a CSA (community supported agriculture) organic box program, which offers a selection of fresh vegetables grown on the farm. "We deliver as well, and the neat thing is that all the veggies are organic and heirloom."

The couple plans to host Lunch and Learn sessions this summer. "People often have questions and we hope to answer them through this program. For instance, if you have a question about honey, you can come in for a three-hour session where a beekeeper gives you an overview on how honey is made and then you get to eat a honey-themed lunch."

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