



## Mitch Phillips Phillips Honey

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*"I believe that all local foods  
are healthier and help sustain  
the local economy."*

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**When Mitchell Phillips was 15-years-old** he begrudgingly attended an hour-long lecture for his local 4-H Club. The guest was to speak about beekeeping, a subject Mitchell thought sounded pretty boring. In fact, Mitchell says, "I didn't really want to go."

Today, Mitchell is the keeper of twelve bee hives and a most talented apiarist. That lecture, he says now, "was amazing" and immediately inspired him. Following the lecturer's advice he applied for a youth scholarship from the Iowa Honey Producers Association. And he got it. The scholarship included a hive, a smoker, a veil, and a two-frame extractor tool.

At ease in a t-shirt and shorts, Mitchell cares for his hives and the 60,000 bees that live inside. He has learned a lot about managing bees in the past five years, but says he'll never know it all. At a time when bees are struggling across the nation, Mitchell is learning quickly what the bees need to survive in both the summer and winter months. He is an avid reader and researcher, citing author Keith Delaplane as one of his best resources. "The more you know about the biology of the bees, the better you will do at management," he says. He also has to be knowledgeable about varroa mites, diseases like No-



sema and American foulbrood, agricultural chemical drift, and things which require a great finesse of timing like hive splitting and requeening.

Mitchell is genuinely fascinated by bees, their complex communication system, their efficient and hygienic colonies, and their expertise in navigation and calculation. He can explain not only why raw honey is better and more beneficial to your health, he can tell you bees are able to maintain a hive temperature in the mid-90s and can forage for nectar and pollen over 2 miles away. Did you know that in one bee's lifetime it only produces 1/12 of one teaspoon of honey? Did you know that to make one pound of honey, workers in a hive fly 55,000 miles and tap

two million flowers?

Mitchell is currently a student in finance and real estate at the University of Northern Iowa. When he can't make it back to check on his hives near New Hampton, his parents Patty and Lloyd help out with hive maintenance. They also help him sell his honey at the farmers market and do the honey extraction in the fall.

You can purchase Mitchell's raw, wildflower honey at the Decorah Farmers Markets. Liquid honey is available in one, two, three and six pound bottles as well as convenient 2oz and 8oz bottles. This summer Mitchell is also offering creamed honey, peppermint scented lip balm and lotion bars.