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CRYSTAL OLIVE

SILVER TOP DAIRY LTD. | FORT MACLEOD, AB

Crystal Olive's journey in dairy farming is rooted in family, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to moving forward, no matter how hard the path. A wife and mother to two boys, Alex (15) and Clark (12), and stepdaughter Raquel (22), Crystal's life took a profound turn when her eldest son, Alex, was diagnosed at just 18 months old with a rare genetic disease. The condition affects muscle control, immune function, and lung health, and carries a high risk of cancer. By the age of 10, Alex was wheelchair-bound, and for many families facing this diagnosis, survival into adulthood is uncertain.

At the time, Crystal had spent a decade working as a practical nurse with a specialization as an operating room technician. To be closer to family support, she made the difficult decision to step away from her nursing career and return home—joining the family dairy operation. What began as a practical decision soon became a calling.

Silver Top Dairy Ltd. located near Fort Macleod, Alberta, is a 48-year-old, multi-generational farm owned and operated by Crystal's parents, Bill and

Rita, alongside her brother Rob, his wife Nikki, and Crystal herself. Crystal initially helped where she could — covering milkings, assisting with schedules, and taking on payroll duties. In 2013, when the family built a new dairy barn, her role evolved significantly. She transitioned into managing the day-to-day operations of the dairy, overseeing herd management, payroll, and human resources, and becoming a central leader in the business.

A typical day for Crystal starts with getting her kids on the bus. With milking still underway, she heads to the barn to check cows, assists in the rotary, catches up on paperwork, and supports staff with daily chores—all before her kids return home from school. It's a fast-paced rhythm that blends family and farming.

One of Crystal's proudest accomplishments is the progress of the herd through the integration of technology. From activity collars to a structured breeding program, she has played a key role in modernizing the operation and driving continuous improvement.

Beyond the farm, Crystal has taken on leadership roles within the dairy industry. She has been selected to attend the Future Leaders of Dairy Conference, spoken at a WestGen AGM on women in dairy panel, and served on multiple Alberta Milk committees, lending her voice and perspective to help shape the industry.

“The farm wasn't my plan — but it became my purpose.”



“Clear is kind, and setting high standards is not optional—it’s a requirement. When you lead by example, your team will follow.”

Navigating agriculture as a woman hasn’t always been easy. Crystal has encountered moments where service providers spoke down to her or underestimated her role. But, as she puts it, she is her father’s daughter—she knows how to stand up for herself and insist on respect. She believes women bring a unique strength to farming: compassion for animals and people, the ability to multitask, and a high level of organization—qualities that are essential in managing a large operation.

“Women bring compassion, organization, & strength to farm leadership.”

Balancing farm life with family is something Crystal openly admits is a work in progress. For many years, the farm came first. Today, her family is intentionally shifting that mindset. Bringing her sister-in-law Nikki more deeply into the operation is creating space for Crystal to spend more time with her family and work toward a healthier work-life balance.

Family support has been foundational. Her brother Rob has been her biggest supporter, and together the family is focused on strengthening relationships built on respect and love as they prepare for the next generation.

Crystal’s impact extends well beyond dairy. She is an active volunteer fundraiser for the A-T Children’s Project, running ultramarathons and taking Alex on adaptive hikes, many would think impossible. Through these efforts, she raises awareness and funds while proving that hard things can be done—even in the face of overwhelming odds.

Her advice to young women considering a future in dairy is clear and direct: “Clear is kind, and setting high standards is not optional—it’s a requirement. When you lead by example, your team will follow.”

Being recognized during the International Year of the Woman Farmer is deeply meaningful to Crystal. It’s an acknowledgment of hard work, perseverance, and growth. As her dad often says, **“If you’re not moving forward—constantly changing and adapting—you’re going backwards.”**