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BIG YEAR FOR THE BECK FAMILY



1 *The Beck Family - Dannica (left), Josh, Jennifer, Jase, Shay, Lori, and Brent - are Cypress County's Farm Family of the Year for 2023.*

It's been 100 years since both Hilda and Schuler came to be, so it's fitting that a family with roots in both hamlets is this year's Cypress County Farm Family of the Year.

The Beck family was nominated two separate times by their peers, not just for being a fourth-generation operation but also for showing leadership, innovation, and community spirit.

"We want to leave a legacy for our family and for the community, and not leave a liability that they have to clean up," said Josh Beck, who along with wife Jennifer and kids Dannica, Jase, and Shay make Hilda the home of Beck Family Farms. "We're trying to do the best we can."

The mixed cattle and grain farm dates back to 1923 when Fredrick Beck settled in Schuler. Son Gordon and his wife Josephine were leaders in their own right, running a hardware store, lumber yard, and machinery dealership in Schuler as well as sitting on plenty of boards and community associations, and eventually passing the farm down to Brent and Lori. Brent, a lifetime member of the Medicine Hat Oilmen's Association, was also a director on the 11-34 seed plant.

Unsurprisingly, those pursuits have become the family DNA, with Josh on the county's Agricultural Services Board, Jennifer on parent council and the community association, and the whole family active in 4-H. Josh is also director of the BT Grazing Association and past president of the Hilda Water Co-op, among other commitments.

He definitely sees the importance of that tradition.

"The original shop (Fredrick) built is still there," said Josh. "The barn he built is still there.

"We've kind of carried on from there. It's just what you do, stay active."

Being active is one reason why they've continued to be successful, but nobody said farming was easy. The biggest challenge in recent years has been managing droughts and keeping precious soil in good condition. That's led to a series of innovations, and you'd better believe the family spreads the credit around to the whole community.

"Our area, there's a lot of leaders," said Josh. "We're watching what they're doing and following a little bit, but we are doing some stuff that other people haven't, trying to use cover crops... to get our soils back into shape.

"Our area is progressive in that way; we're all working together to figure this thing out."

Peers have taken notice. Josh won the Orville Yanke Award for excellence in agriculture and conservation efforts in Southern Alberta at the Farming Smarter conference in February. The Cypress County award is actually a dual award, as the winner also receives the BMO Farm Family Award from the Calgary Stampede. The Becks will get their county award later in July at the Medicine Hat Stampede.

"The kids are looking forward to going to Calgary," laughed Josh, noting they've never been to the big city stampede before. "It's kind of neat, it's our century award, then the Farm Family Award, I won the Orville Yanke..."

The list can go on. The Becks are too invested in their community to slow down now. Cypress County is proud to name them our Farm Family of the Year.