

Local award winners honoured at Stampede

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By Tim Kalinowski



The Dykstra family from Burdett celebrates its B.M.O Farm Family Award presentation at the Calgary Stampede. The Dykstra family farm won the award for the County of 40 Mile this year.--submitted photo

The Calgary Stampede honoured Monday night local BMO Family Farm Award winners A and B Acres and L. Gill Ventures.

Andrew and Bev Dykstra are the owners of A and B Acres near Burdett. Andrew says his family was greatly honoured to have been chosen for this award.

"I think it's good company to be in," he says. "I have looked over the list of past winners and they have all been neighbours, friends and acquaintances of ours. It's humbling and it's gratifying."

The Dykstras took over the family farm operation from Bev's dad Bruce Major in 1977. But on both Bev's and Andrew's sides of the family, farming goes back at least three generations.

"The technology and equipment has definitely changed, but the general purpose and practice of agriculture is basically the same. We have just found quicker and easier ways to do it and help it produce better due to genetics, crop science, chemicals and technology. We learn a little bit more every generation, and hopefully we do a better and more healthy job."

There is no other place the Dykstras would rather be than on the farm.

"I think farming is one of the main building blocks of civilization. That's where the economy starts, and builds on that foundation," says Andrew.

From the Launa and Laverne Gill's perspective, agriculture is an ever-evolving profession which is full of immense variety and exciting challenges.

"It's nice to be recognized for something we love doing," says Launa, who farms near Veinerville. "It's a great way of life. It's a great place to raise a family. You really can't ask for much more."

"It's been a highlight of our (farming) career," agrees husband Laverne. "We want to try to do things well, and it feels good to know somebody is recognizing that fact."

The Gills started out with only 240 acres in 1987. They now own or rent 4,700 acres and have deep connections to [Farming Smarter](#) in Cypress County. Laverne says farming has never been more technical, market-driven or science-based than it is today.

"We sell to India now. We sell to China. Canola has become a big part of our crop rotation, and peas and an lentils. Today, it is important to have diversity in the way you farm, and not be afraid to accept some of the new technology that is out there."

"We look at sustainability as well," adds Launa. "It's not just about taking and taking."

Laverne says winning the BMO Family Farm Award has been a tremendous experience.

"It has taken a lot of effort and a lot of work along the way. I think we really did start small, and we have been able to grow and be successful at farming. We're proud of that fact."