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Four Generations of American Crystal Growers Keep Pushing Through Adversities for Love of the Journey

BATHGATE, NORTH DAKOTA (April 1, 2022) – Multi-generation farms make the grower-owned cooperative of American Crystal Sugar Company extra special, and Cindy McColl Hughes is a testament as she nears 50 years of being on her own family farm. As one of few female shareholders, she’s encountered some unique challenges, but she doesn’t regret her commitment to the journey even through the adversity that hit her family.

Cindy’s father-in-law was among the pioneers that began the American Crystal co-op in 1973. She farmed alongside her first husband, Scott, until he passed away in 1995. Aaron, their son, then stepped in to keep farm operations with the family, but he tragically passed away during planting season in 2012. Looking at the impending harvest without Aaron, it may have been a turning point for some. Not Cindy. She had the next-generation farmer, her grandson Scotty, waiting in the wings, and he would need her to persevere. That fall her farming neighbors and friends came to the family’s aid, digging up every acre of sugarbeets in just a single day. Their support lifted her and her family in tough times, and to this day they still watch out for her and offer help when needed.

“I am so glad that I continued to farm so that I have something to pass on to the future generation,” said Cindy. “Scotty might just be the guy to take the reins one day.” Since his dad’s passing, Scotty works side by side with his grandma learning the operation and continuing his education in preparation for the day he’ll be called on to take over the farm.

Cindy’s favorite part of farming has always been harvesting and you can still find her running the roterbeeter. “It’s the family farms that make this co-op great,” said Cindy. Her fourth-generation farmer, Scotty, and fellow shareholders couldn’t agree more.



Pictured left: A young Scotty is sitting on a Crystal Sugarbeet Seed box. The photo won a John Deere contest that year.
Pictured right: Cindy and her grandson, Scotty, with a 2021 take on the original seed box photo.



About American Crystal Sugar Company

American Crystal Sugar Company is an agricultural cooperative owned by 2,650 shareholder-entities in the Red River Valley involved in the growing and processing of sugarbeets. American Crystal is the largest beet sugar producer in the United States. American Crystal operates sugar factories at East Grand Forks, Crookston and Moorhead, Minnesota; and Drayton and Hillsboro, North Dakota; and Sidney, Montana. Its corporate headquarters and technical services center are located in Moorhead.