



A Partnership That Makes a Difference

BC Dairy and Alberta Milk Meet Goals in Holiday Campaign



Amanda Poelman

This past holiday season, BC Dairy and Alberta Milk partnered with BC Children's Hospital Foundation and Alberta Children's Hospital Foundation, respectively, to match community donations, turning generosity into meaningful support. The campaign supports some of the greatest needs of BC Children's Hospital and Alberta Children's Hospital, including transformative technologies, groundbreaking research and enhanced clinical programs that improve care for kids across both provinces.

BC Dairy

BC Dairy's campaign kicked off November 27th and featured Chilliwack dairy farmers, Marc and Jessica Dalton, along with their three children: Kyle (7), Emily and Alice (5½). "Alice is our complex kid," says Jessica, "She was diagnosed with right atrial isomerism when I was 20 weeks pregnant with the twins." Jessica explained that isomerism is a type of 'heterotaxy' which means that Alice's organs are in different locations, and specifically, her heart is very complex with only one ventricle. Fortunately, when Alice and Emily were born, Alice didn't need initial support and did much better than expected. However, as she grew the demand on her heart also grew, resulting in a 3-stage surgical plan. Alice was able to skip the first stage but had her first surgery at 2½ months old. The third stage surgery took place in October 2024, and while more surgery may be needed eventually, Jessica is happy to share that nothing is currently scheduled, and Alice is a thriving kindergarten student.

"We've now had a 5-year relationship with BC Children's Hospital, and they've been incredibly supportive," says Jessica. "We have never had to worry that she wouldn't receive the care that she needs, and that is very assuring for us as parents." Although the Daltons have been approached previously to be in the BC Dairy campaign, this year it felt like the right time for them. "We didn't feel ready before," says Jessica, "We were still very much in the thick of things. But now that the kids are a bit older and have been creating their own fundraisers, they all agreed when we asked them!" All three Dalton kids have been actively involved in raising money for the hospital, as well as Canuck Place, where the family stayed a lot during the early days.

While Jessica notes the importance of funding the research that is being done, she also wants to make sure a light is shed on what makes the hospital special. "Alice loves going to see her doctors and nurses – it's



Alex hiked the Grand Canyon's 'Rim to River' trail with parents Crystal and Robert, who are thankful for the care he receives at Alberta Children's Hospital for his A-T.



Marc and Jessica Dalton, along with Emily, Kyle and Alice (red suit). Alice is part of the Heart Centre at BC Children's Hospital, where therapeutic programs create magic daily.

pure magic for her! And they do an incredible job of including our other kids who are often with Alice for her appointments," says Jessica. A great example was in October when Alice had her last surgery. "The staff had set up a costume shop, there was a therapy dog parade, and all the departments had booths in the lobby so the kids could go trick-or-treating." These glimmers of excitement make being at the hospital a positive experience for families at a time when it may feel like their world is caving in, Jessica shares.

Alberta Milk

Alberta Milk's matching campaign for the Alberta Children's Hospital Foundation also began at the end of November, featuring the Olive family – Robert, Crystal, Alex and

Clark, from Silver Top Dairy in Fort Macleod, Alberta. "We have been 'frequent flyers' at Children's Hospital since Alex was diagnosed with A-T at 18 months old," says Crystal. A-T (Ataxia-Telangiectasia) is a rare, progressive, degenerative muscle disease that causes lack of muscle control, immune deficiencies and high risks of cancer, Crystal explains. "There are only 500 kids in North America," Crystal says of the small A-T community, "Most kids don't survive their 20s."

The Olives make the 90-minute drive to Calgary every 4-6 months, unless Alex gets sick in between. "Alex has a dream team of doctors," says Crystal, "They care so much about him and are personally invested in his care." Alex is currently 15-years old, attending school – with the help of a fulltime aid, and works with a personal trainer who

helps him train to keep his muscles strong. "Alex is doing well because he does his best to take care of himself," says Crystal, who has dedicated her life to living by the motto, "You can do hard things," while running 100-mile mountain races to raise money for A-T research.

In 2025, with the help of generous sponsors and donations within the agriculture community, the Olives purchased a Joelette adaptive hiking chair for Alex, and after countless days of training and preparation, the family slowly hiked all the way down to the river of the Grand Canyon and back in ONE DAY. This feat, while the most physically demanding of Crystal and Robert's life, made Alex the only A-T kid to have ever hiked the Bright Angel – Rim to River trail.

A Positive Impact

Both Crystal and Jessica are incredibly grateful for the partnership between the Associations and Children's Hospital. "At the end of the day we are all parents and if we haven't needed Children's Hospital ourselves, we definitely know someone who has," says Crystal. Jessica adds, "As dairy farmers we are always providing for the community through dairy products – that is our role, and Children's Hospital plays a huge role in the community too because so many kids rely on the hospital regularly, not just for one-time visits."

Jennifer Woron, Executive Director of Market Development for BC Dairy, echoes that sentiment, stressing the importance of community partnerships, saying, "Community partnerships are one important part of a larger piece of the work we do to support our industry. It is important for dairy farmers to have the trust of the overall community, but it's also important for farmers to feel like they are giving back. Strong community partnerships are vital for advocacy."

For families like the Daltons and the Olives, support from the Children's Hospitals came when it was needed most. Their experiences serve as a reminder that behind every donation and every partnership are real families, real moments, and real hope – made possible through a community willing to show up for one another, not just at Christmas, but 365 days a year.

Both BC Dairy and Alberta Milk are proud to have met their fundraising goals, matching \$120,000 and \$100,000 respectively for the BC Children's and Alberta Children's Hospital Foundations.

“When it’s showing a cow in heat, no questions you just go breed her.”



Ben Korporaal, Valedoorn Farms, Agassiz, BC, Canada

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