

# CHAMBER MEMBERS INSPIRE!



## Prairie Supply Co.

Dale Jacobs, Prairie Supply Co. My title, I'm actually strategy and leadership.

### How did your business originate?

Prairie Supply Co. began 11 years ago with a passion for the industry and an understanding there was a need to be filled in Dauphin. Born in Dauphin, Jacobs has lived with his family in Churchill, Lundar and then Gimli.

"And they had a store there called H.P. Tergesen and Sons. That was my favourite store growing up, because I went to elementary and high school in Gimli. And every time we came back and visited grandma and grandpa, aunts and uncles in Dauphin, I was always asking where's that store? But that store didn't exist in Dauphin," he explained.

When his parents retired in Dauphin, Jacobs came back with them and after two years in the community, he decided to open a store similar to Tergesens' to fill that need.

### What do you think makes your business stand out?

"With Prairie Supply Co., we know the only constant is change, so we always strive to make sure we're going above and beyond, not only for the area, but we like to be leaders in our industry," Jacobs said, pointing out his business competes across Canada.

It is important for the Prairie Supply Co. family to progress, he said, either individually, as a team, or for the business, as a whole, to grow positively.

"Collective success, I always say, is important. So bringing that attitude into work and into what we do on a daily basis, I think it gets us stronger results," Jacobs added.

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## **What are some major milestones your business has passed?**

Prairie Supply Co. marked its 10th anniversary in Dauphin, March 17, 2020. Another big milestone, he noted, was to get an e-commerce, or online system set up to ship, on a daily basis, across Canada and North America.

“We've developed our online store and online shop for seven years. So with the current situation, with the pandemic on, we were in a good position when it hit,” Jacobs explained.

“Although there were extreme challenges this year, no doubt about that, it was a very tough year, our digital foundation was built. And that doesn't happen overnight. That comes from trial and error.”

Dauphinites may not realise it, he said, but Prairie Supply Co.'s sales floor is also its warehouse, with all of its inventory integrated and requiring two full time staff to work strictly on the e-commerce business. The biggest online users are in British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario, Jacobs said, adding as an independent, the local business partners with Shopify, as well.

## **What about being a member and a part of the chamber network means the most?**

Jacobs believes the Dauphin and District Chamber of Commerce puts businesses first and provides an opportunity for growth.

“There's tons of opportunity for networking and I find it just a breath of fresh air, being with like-minded individuals at a chamber event,” he said.

“I always say business owners are one in the same, where they understand the daily grind of working for yourself. It's nice to be able to relate.”

## **In what ways has your business had to change or pivot due to covid?**

Jacobs feels 2020 has been tough for businesses and no one could have been ready for the quick change in business practices that were required, due to covid.

“So really, what got us through to the spring of 2021 was a very, very strong team and it wasn't one individual that could have pivoted this business any given day. There are five or six

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individuals who are working here and it wasn't just myself in my position that got us through. It was really the strength of the team and like I talked about, collective success too," he said.

When the door was locked, Jacobs explained, the team worked on increasing online sales and getting a local delivery system in place with his employees driving orders to locations throughout the community.

"So, we did have that digital foundation in place, but the pivot was, we really had to think on our feet. The best thing we did, I believe, was we continued to push forward. I think if you take your foot off the pedal, it's a lot harder to get back on that. So we continued to power through during this, even in the worst of times," he added.

A few items were added to the business, as well. Noticing the downtown core does not have many options for a healthier snack or drink, Prairie Supply Co. added a snack section.

"And we called it our essential section. We do a lot of soaps and we do a lot of body grooming already, but we always talked about snacks," Jacobs said, noting a positive part of the pandemic was to create a curated snack collection.

Pairing up with Western Bakery to make a well-received Prairie Cookie, Prairie Supply Co. added Gorp Energy Bars, Cranked Energy Bars and Stoneybrook Creamery milk in glass jugs.

"It's gone over quite well. It's a nice mix and again, I think that's part of knowing that the only constant is change and continuing to evolve to keep growing. So, yeah, we're super excited about our snack program," he added.

## **What does the term Stronger Together mean to you?**

It means collective success, Jacobs said, by wanting, not only Dauphin, but the Parkland to have success in businesses.

"We want more restaurants opening up, we want more retail options opening up. Because if everyone's doing their part, it really gives a reason for the Parkland area to keep it local and shop local," he said, noting the more businesses expand their offerings and different ways to order, it shows the strength of business owners and how they adapt.

"And as well, the more we do this, it's more jobs created. Everything from the business sector, supporting your local newspaper, supporting your local restaurant, your local retail store, it all

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adds up. That's jobs for our family members and for ourselves. And in the long run, it hopefully continues to make Dauphin and the Parkland an excellent place to live."

## **What benefits do you see when the community chooses to support local businesses?**

"You know, the one thing people don't realise is when you support local, that's who supports you," Jacobs said.

For example, Prairie Supply Co. supports many local causes from local sport groups, to other organizations.

"I don't think I've ever been at a wedding social without a Prairie Supply Co. hoodie, or package added. And that's great, we take pride in that. That all comes from us being supported," he said.

"So it's kind of one of those things where that keeps the community moving, that keeps the non-profits moving."

As a Rotary Club member, Jacobs noted most of the clubs' initiatives are business-based, needing the support of the business community to ensure success for many projects in the Parkland.

## **How has the community specifically supported you and your business?**

Support from the community has been great, Jacobs said, noting when Prairie Supply Co. was not allowed to have customers in the store, many people jumped to the online store, to place orders locally.

"We had tons of local deliveries and a lot of people still supporting our business one way or another. So, we really appreciated that. That got us through to the other side and we're really looking forward to a strong 2021," he said.

"You know, when you're deemed non-essential, in a way, it feels like you're not needed. And our customers proved that we definitely were, because we were steady. There wasn't one day when something wasn't going on and when someone needed our services. So the community let us know we were essential to them, which was very important for our team."

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## **Anything else you'd like to add that I didn't ask?**

“Well you know, I just think the future in Dauphin is bright. If we continue to all put in the effort, then we are stronger together,” Jacobs said.

“I mean, every time I see a person come to the community, whether it's a new person to the community or somebody who's been here opening up a new business, trying a new venture, maybe making main street better by renovating a building, that's moving this area in the right direction.”

“It's going to take, the community itself to grow stronger. So I'm just very proud of living in Dauphin. I think it's a wonderful place to live. I'm very proud of being from the area and I'm looking forward to continuing to help contribute to Dauphin being successful in the coming years,” he added.