

GOLDEN GLEN CREAMERY

Ruiz family runs dairy, makes cheese

By ALIYA HALL
For the Capital Press

BOW, Wash. — Norma Ruiz first fell in love with cattle at her grandfather's dairy in Mexico, where they milked 20-25 cows.

Now, she is the owner of Ruiz Farm and Golden Glen Creamery, which milks around 150 Holsteins and Jerseys.

After five years working on Whidbey Island raising heifers for dairies, Ruiz bought Golden Glen Creamery in 2014. Two years later, the dairy next door became available and she was able to get a loan through the Farm Service

Agency to purchase it.

"I found it to be something I really liked," Ruiz said of working with the animals. "It's something that brings you back to your childhood, bringing back memories of working with Grandpa."

The creamery makes more than 20 kinds of hand-made cheese, and it partners

with Darigold as well as local restaurants, farmstands and wineries.

On the farm, Ruiz said they also raise their heifers, so the cows stay on the same farm their whole life. Even with her agricultural background, Ruiz said that she's still learning every day at her dairy.

"I say cows are like kids," she said. "You cannot take your

eyes off of them. It's constant learning and understanding."

Family plays a big role in the operation. Ruiz said three generations work on the farm. Her father works with her in the creamery and even the kids help with pulling weeds.

"I think every single family member is involved in something around the farm," she said.

The most rewarding aspect of the dairy is the fact Ruiz can work with her family to help give back to the community. She said she is able to teach her nephews and nieces the value of farms and the land, especially

because they're the future generation and will ultimately inherit the farm.

Ruiz said it was a steep learning curve for her daughter when they moved from California to Washington, because the daughter wasn't exposed to agriculture when they lived in the city. When the rest of Ruiz's family visits from California,



Golden Glen Creamery

Norma Ruiz stands by her family at Ruiz Farm and Golden Glen Creamery. From left are Bennette Ruiz, Adrian Mendoza, Irma Ruiz, Livan Ruiz, Zalaika Hill, Juan Ruiz and Norma Ruiz.

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At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ruiz was fielding calls from Seattle restaurants canceling their orders and became worried about how she was going to sell the cheese.

"Then we started seeing farmstands were getting bus-

ier," she said. "Everything we shipped to restaurants now went to farm stands."

the first thing they will ask is to see the farm.

"The little ones love it," she said. "My nephew wants a cow to put in the backyard."

On farming, Ruiz said it's not about the money, it's about

the passion for what they do. She has instilled in the next generation that it's hard work, but as long as they feel rewarded in what they're doing, it's worth it.




"I can work and do things and the little one can go and get

his feet wet in what it is to work and have responsibilities and chores at four in the morning," she said. "At the end of the day, he's going to feel fulfilled. The skills he gets at the farm he's not going to get outside."

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