

Rural Appreciation Weekend 2008
Oakfield, Dunedoo
Teena Downton, SHARP

The second annual Rural Appreciation Weekend was held at the Nott family property in Dunedoo over the long weekend from Oct 3-6, 2008. Over 130 students from 11 Universities around NSW and the ACT converged for 4 days of activities and experiences giving delegates a feel for what living in the country is all about, the benefits of choosing to take your health career rural, and the chance to network and socialise with students studying degrees ranging from nursing, medicine, nutrition, dietetics, psychology and medical science.

Delegates were treated to a visit to the local Golf Club to have a yarn with the locals, farm tours on the back of a bogey truck or in a convoy of cars and buses, an Aboriginal cultural session, a snake display, sheep dog and shearing demonstrations, and talks from Dr Tilak Dissanayake and Dubbo-based Indigenous health nurse, Louise Lawler. These special guest speakers provided inspiring insights into life and a career in rural health and in working with Indigenous and remote communities. In their presentations, they emphasised how much you are welcomed into such communities when you genuinely approach them with a desire to make a difference, and the importance of education in improving health and lifestyle outcomes in all individuals.

Shannon Nott also spoke about the NRHSN which was a great chance for some of the newer members of the Rural Health Clubs to learn more about what the network is all about, what opportunities and benefits there are, and encouraging them to look out for other activities the network and individual rural health clubs have during the year which they can be involved in.

While the weather alternated during the weekend with welcome rain, lightning shows, and warm sunny days, everyone was having a good time and looking out for one another. A few went on a bushwalk, some swam in one of the dams, and everyone took in the beautiful landscape. It was great to see that the fields were considerably greener than the dirt paddocks of last year's RAW.

Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the RAW challenges including fencing, stockmanship and putting up a tent blind-folded. They were a definite highlight of the weekend, and I will not forget the incredible teamwork, wisdom, judgement and motivation of the SHARP, MIRAGE and MARHS supergroup team which helped us to take out the overall championship.

Other activities included a film night, a B&S Ball, and on the final day, a visit and tour of Prince Hill Wines in Mudgee. What will be most memorable from the weekend are the experiences and friendships made over the 3 days I was there, and the positive encouragement it has provided for my interest in going rural when I graduate.

Full credit goes to the Nott family, RAHMS and the RAW crew for making the weekend such a success and a pleasure to have been a part of. Also Kay Kent and all the clubs who helped support and sponsor the event. The activities were definitely of a much grander scale than last year, and the organisation and planning seemed to fall into place very well. I highly recommend this event to any health student who has not had a rural experience before, or is simply interested in a chance to develop new friendships and have a good time with students from the many multi-disciplines of health. It is not often that students are able to get to know so many students from other health degrees and Universities in such a short time.