

Dear NRHSN Executive,

Having recently attended the Rural Appreciation Weekend at the Nott farm in Dunedoo, I wished to communicate to the NRHSN my experience there.

As a member of my University rural health club, SHARP, I was really excited to be given the opportunity to attend a second Rural Appreciation Weekend (RAW). After having already been once my expectations were quite high due to the quality of my initial experience. The broad range of activities and impact of the guest speakers at my first RAW had really left me wondering as to whether this one would be as good and how it could top the previous. Consequently, I was stunned by the ingenuity of activities and sheer amount of effort that the Nott family and RAHMS team had invested to make yet another brilliant rural health event.

For myself, as well as my fellow club members, the highlight was the guest speakers, who not only gave incredibly inspiring presentations, but also stayed around to exhaustively answer any questions that anyone had of them. Given the complexity and uniqueness of the type of issues that affect people living in the bush, I do not feel that there can ever be too many opportunities to learn more. Of particular relevance for everyone involved though was the multidisciplinary perspective that was encouraged at this RAW. Shannon Nott (the organiser), the guest speakers, and the presence of students from so many different health backgrounds served to make rural health relevant for someone of any health persuasion. It is encouraging to know that rural health recognises not only the need for medical professionals, but also the broad and distinct skill base that is represented and made possible by the Allied Health field.

Additionally, besides the fact that the activities were highly enjoyable, what I particularly noted was how many students, who might previously have been somewhat wary about issues such as safety and social relationships in the bush, had a complete turnaround by the end of the weekend. The selection of activities served to develop insight into the fact that rural areas are simply like any other 'different' place. Once you know how things work and how to make sensible decisions, a wealth of experience is open to you. The highly social nature of the mixed club team activities and bush disco helped break down the social barriers that people invariably place around themselves when in unfamiliar environments. The end result being an obvious drive from students from all of the different clubs seeking to maintain contact with their peers at other universities even after the weekend was over.

Having been twice, I almost regret having to likely miss out on a place at any future possible RAW, as I cannot imagine any rural health student not wanting to attend. I highly recommend this event to all NRHSN members and hope that it continues on into the future.

Regards,

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