

Press Release
(For immediate release)
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Programme injects new blood into health sector

More young Southlanders are fostering a passion for a vocation in health as a result of the Southern District Health Board's (DHB) innovative incubator programme.

Southern DHB workforce development manager Justine Greig said the programme, now in its third year, was definitely having an impact.

"We're really pleased with the results," she said. "A number of Year 13 students indicated they are going into health related tertiary study this year and several Year 12 students were keen to be involved in the programme for a second year which is fantastic.

"Your return on investment has to be long term with initiatives like this."

After a successful pilot at Aurora College in 2009, the programme was expanded to include Southland Boys' High School, Verdon College and Menzies College last year.

"We wanted to include a rural school because that poses some different challenges for us," Ms Greig said.

The Invercargill Licensing Trust and ILT Foundation have supported the initiative since its inception with funding totaling \$138,000, including recently approved grants of \$5000 and \$25,000 respectively.

ILT Foundation and Invercargill Licensing Trust chairman Alan Dennis said the programme played a valuable role in the community's future.

"We need to assist our young people to make their vocational choices and support them to achieve their career goals," he said.

"This programme will ultimately benefit our community by contributing more health professionals."

Ms Greig said the interactive nature of the course – delivered locally by programme co-ordinator Jan Tait – was a key element in its success.

"The Year 13 students have the opportunity to complete work experience at the hospital and could find themselves in theatre. This is a very privileged opportunity for the students because they're going into areas even some existing staff don't go into," she said.

"They are touching health and experiencing something they wouldn't normally be exposed to."

The programme brought students face-to-face with an array of professionals across different departments, including dentistry, pharmacy, social work, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, laboratory services, information services and sterile services.

"We're demonstrating the depth and breadth of opportunities in the health care industry."

It was also indirectly impacting on a wider audience.

"There are a range of health messages being provided to the students and they are taking those out of the classroom and sharing them with their friends and families," Ms Greig said.

Data collated from student feedback was “very positive across a range of factors”. When asked whether they had enjoyed the programme, the average overall rating from students was 4.7 out of 5 in 2009 and 4.8 out of 5 last year.

“It’s great to see this programme start to build,” Ms Greig said.

“It’s a real community partnership for Southland between the students, the schools, the healthcare sector and the funders. It’s being provided by people who live and work in Southland.”

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