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## Young Rural Ambassador passionate about country shows

A 19-year-old originally from Coonalpyn in the Upper South East has been named South Australia's Young Rural Ambassador for 2016.

Caitlin Marshall, who represents the Southern Show Association, was named the winner at the Young Rural Ambassador Award State Final by the Agricultural Societies Council of South Australia at the Morphettville Junction on Friday night.

Now based in Mt Barker, Caitlin is currently studying a Bachelor of Speech Pathology and is planning on working in this field in rural areas once she completes her degree.

Her involvement at the Coonalpyn Show includes being an exhibitor since a young age, stewarding in the art, flower and Lego sections and assisting with setting up and packing up.

"Friday was an absolutely wonderful and enlightening experience, from learning about how youth are and can be involved in country shows and learning about the Royal Adelaide Show and seeing the facilities," she said.

"I am feeling absolutely ecstatic about winning the award. It was such an honour to meet and compete with such a wonderful group of my peers and to appreciate the strong sense of community and like mindedness we all shared.

"Over the next 12 months I hope to attend as many country shows as I can and to share and learn new ideas which can be implemented to further engage young people."

Georgie Beighton from South East and Border and the Penola Show was named runner up and is going to study Veterinary Science next year in Wagga Wagga. She is heavily involved in the show scene exhibiting cattle, sheep and horses at local shows and the Royal Adelaide Show.

"I was thrilled to participate in the award and will be doing my best to encourage other young people to be involved in regional and royal shows," she said.

"I want to see country shows to continue in the future with the support of the local community as I am very passionate about showing cattle, sheep and horses and involving more young people which is something I will work hard to achieve."

The other six finalists were: Bethany Rankin (Northern), Tahlia Lockwood (Central), Kate Harris (Yorke Peninsula), James Higgins (South East and Border), Emily Doering (Northern) and Megan Grainger (Eyre Peninsula).

PIRSA Director Agriculture, Food and Wine Justin Ross said the winner and finalists contribute greatly to country shows around the state.

“Country shows are important events for rural communities across South Australia,” Mr Ross said.

“At the heart of these events are the volunteers whose dedication and commitment make them happen,” Mr Ross said.

Young Rural Ambassador Award Coordinator Peter Angus said the winner and all the finalists were high achievers in their communities.

“It’s inspiring to hear and read about all the amazing things these young people are involved in their respective communities,” Mr Angus said.

“They truly are the bright stars of our rural communities and help them thrive with their enthusiasm, ideas and willingness to volunteer.”

In 2014-15, regional South Australia contributed around \$25.4 billion to the state’s economy, over one quarter of our Gross State Product.

The Rural Ambassador Award highlights the importance of youth in rural South Australia, and in particular, the agricultural show movement.

Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA) is the main sponsor of the Young Rural Ambassador Award.