

Friday, 7 September 2018

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Winner: Christopher Hutchinson – 0407 645 043.

1st runner up: Kevin Lintern – 0428 057 058.

2nd runner up: Matthew Hagger – 0427 240 074.

Mechanic from Kapunda named 2018 State Rural Ambassador

A mechanic from Kapunda in the Barossa has been announced as the winner of the 2018 State Rural Ambassador Award, as the coveted awards program reaches its milestone 21st anniversary.

Christopher Hutchinson, 26, representing the Northern Region was named the winner at the State Rural Ambassador Awards dinner run by the SA Country Shows Association on Tuesday 4 September.

The State Government, through Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA), is proud to be a sponsor of the Rural Ambassador Award, which began in 1998 and is run by SA Country Shows.

The award program is open to people aged between 20-30 who are committed to their local show and community, and highlights the importance of youth in the agricultural show movement.

The first runner up of the Rural Ambassador Award was Kevin Lintern, 28, from the Central Association and the second runner-up was Matthew Hagger, 28, from the Northern Association.

Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development Tim Whetstone congratulated Christopher, the runners up and finalists, and emphasised the importance of the Rural Ambassador Award Program as an integral part of engaging youth in agriculture.

“Over the past 21 years, the Rural Ambassador Award Program has seen hundreds of young people participate in the program at local show, association and state levels, making substantial contributions to their regional communities,” he said.

“Many are now connected through their careers, particularly in primary industries and their regional communities, and represent the next generation of farmers and youth in agriculture.

“Well done to the winner, Christopher Hutchinson, the runners up, Kevin Lintern and Matthew Hagger, and all the finalists of this year’s award – I’m sure they’ll continue to shine bright in their futures and maintain a strong presence at their shows and in their communities.”

As Vice President of the Kapunda Light and Agricultural Show, Mr Hutchinson has been an active role model in his community and is passionate about volunteering and helping others in need.

At the awards, Mr Hutchinson spoke about his brother’s journey after being diagnosed with cancer and how he volunteered with Camp Quality and the Childhood Cancer Association.

The past four years have seen Mr Hutchinson become involved in the Kapunda Show, firstly as a judge and then convenor of the Ute Muster.

With a keen interest in the motoring world, he is a Confederation of Australian Motor Sport (CAMS) accredited volunteer with the South Australian Motor Racing Officials Association.

Mr Hutchinson, who has assisted other country shows, including Eudunda, Gawler and Angaston, would love to work in the agricultural sector or undertake further study at university, and was thrilled to be named South Australia's 2018 Rural Ambassador.

"I am very excited for the opportunities that lie ahead, especially attending country shows across the state, particularly those of my fellow finalists," he said.

"I congratulate my fellow finalists who all did an amazing job. It was a pleasure to be part of the group who are now lifelong friends.

"I would love to visit as many shows as possible and network with all committees and see how we can work together to continue to revitalise country shows.

"I am very grateful to PIRSA giving myself and the two runners up the opportunity to head overseas and partake in this fantastic exchange program.

"From my experience with the Kapunda Show and our success in including young people, I look forward to communicating with other shows regarding how we foster young people into other shows."

First runner-up Kevin Lintern is convenor of the Mannum and Mount Pleasant Shows, has a background in sheep and cattle grazing and appreciated the Rural Ambassador experience.

"After spending the past few days with this amazing crew, I can't be prouder of Chris for winning and the rest of the group," Mr Lintern said.

"I feel as though I have known my fellow finalists for a lifetime and it has been amazing meeting so many people across the show and the common passion they share."

Second runner-up Matthew Hagger represents the Jamestown Show, is currently studying a Certificate IV in Woolclassing and was grateful to have been part of the program.

"It has been an eye opening experience over the past four days, which I am honoured to be a part of," Mr Hagger said.

"To make the top three is great, and I also congratulate both Chris and Kevin for their awards.

"I hope I can attend other country shows particularly those of the fellow competitors and I hope to be able to take my children with me to further encourage and show them the value of country shows in other communities."

The finalists for this year's award were: Georgia Heinicke, Murraylands (Pinnaroo Show), Mason Galpin South East and Border (Penola Show), Asha Modra, South East and Border, (Mundulla Show).

The top three in the awards will go on a two-week overseas study tour as their major prize. In addition, the group of finalists will all go to the Sydney Royal Easter Show in 2019.

Rural Ambassador State Coordinator Peter Angus said the ambassador program has been a great success injecting youth into country shows with many former participants taking on leadership roles in their local shows.

He said the six 2018 finalists were a close-knit group who are excited about attending each other's shows.

"They really gelled together right from the start and were really there to encourage one another which was evident in wanting to support one finalist in the National Beef Paraders' final instead of the event they had on their program," he said.

The Rural Ambassador Award is also sponsored by the Royal Agricultural and Horticultural Society of SA Education Foundation, Stock Journal, RM Williams and the Showmen's Guild of SA.