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(For immediate release)

Developing young leaders for the Waitemata DHB

Early 5am wake-up calls and nights under tarpaulin in a remote bush location aren't for everyone – especially in the midst of winter.

But they brought out the best in five young North Shore Hospital-based Waitemata DHB staff selected from a pool of applicants for this year's Rotary Youth Leadership Awards programme.

Kellin Pungatara, Albert Delorino, Rebecca Watkin, Nikki Renall and Ashley Kim were among 120 participants from a number of organisations taking part in an eight-day initiative that started with a week-long series of inspirational lectures, workshops and activities at Eastern Beach. The focus was on team building, problem solving, and communication skills.

Little could they know what lay ahead when they were whisked off to a "secret," remote destination for their testing phase - allowing them to put theory into practice.

"Everything we'd done until that point was priming us for what was to come," Nikki Renall says. "We just didn't realise it."

Helping run the testing phase was DHB medical scientist Jon Atkinson who created the course's final segment based on the New Zealand Army's officer selection standards.

Jon is a former full-time soldier who has served on peacekeeping missions in both medical and infantry capacities.

He is still a member of the NZ Army Reserve and says the Rotary scheme gives participants the opportunity to test themselves and lead others through a range of challenging scenarios.

Everyone agrees the bar is set high right from the start.

"We were outside of our usual comfort zones from day one," Rebecca Watkin says. "The programme quickly made us acknowledge our strengths and weaknesses."

Ashley Kim says the experience boosted her confidence.

"I am usually the quiet one in a group – but this taught me that it's OK to speak up and to be the leader in certain situations."

Kellin Pungatara says the leadership aspect was all the more daunting with a group of strangers.

But the feedback he got from other participants soon made him realise he was up for the challenge.

“I was told I was calm under pressure and that the same sense of calm was exuded to others. It’s hard to get people to follow when you don’t know them so to get that kind of reaction was very encouraging.”

Albert Delorino says the programme ranks among the best experiences of his life.

“It pushed me physically and mentally - revealing my strengths and weaknesses and providing me with an incredibly valuable learning experience.

“Going back into the real world, I’ve found myself carrying more confidence and self-awareness when interacting with others. I now feel better equipped to deal with difficult situations. All in all, it was an unforgettable week with an awesome bunch of people.”

Waitemata DHB Director of Allied Health, Scientific and Technical Professions Tamzin Brott says the programme aligns closely with the DHB’s organisational goal to be better best and brilliant in all that it does.

She says a number of DHB staff, aged between 20 and 28, have participated over the past few years and brought their new-found skills and boosted confidence back to the work place.

“Strong leadership is crucial to the delivery of world-class healthcare and better outcomes for our patients,” she says. “These young people are our future and it is great to have this opportunity to help them develop their potential.”

Caption: Young leaders: Back. Left to right, Albert Delorino, Ashley Kim, Nikki Renall, Jon Atkinson, Rebecca Watkin. Front, Kellin Pungatara

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