

News release 26 June 2009

WEST COAST HOSPITALITY WINS AWARDS DOWN SOUTH

Tai Poutini Polytechnic's hospitality students "did the Polytechnic proud" last weekend when they walked away with a total of 28 medals from the Southern Light Salon Culinaire, an annual regional competition which aims to promote excellence within the industry.

"I was utterly delighted to have achieved so well," says Tai Poutini's Head of Service Industries, Roderick Turner. "Winning a medal in a competition like this shows dedication and a very high degree of skill."

Through an internal competition, eight Tai Poutini students were selected to compete in four classes – Table Setting, Beverage Service, Cocktails and Barista.

They were - Anne Patterson, Blu Marqueses, Danienlle Surgenor-Jansen, Amy Steger, Ashleigh Fanselow, Nicole Devescovi, Anjelica Hunt and Chris Hunter.

The students were competing against peers from the Southern Institute of Technology and Otago Polytechnic, both described by Turner as having "a tradition of very high standards".

"It certainly wasn't a walk in the park. We were up against some stiff competition."

This is the first year Tai Poutini students have taken part in the competition, held this year in Invercargill. "We had a nine hour drive, so you have to factor in a bit of jet-lag!"

Judging for the Southern Light Salon Culinaire is done on a prescriptive basis, using strict international standards. "The fact we got six gold, 12 silver and 10 bronze medals is evidence our students have achieved a very high standard in practical and technical skills," says Turner, who adds that their achievements will benefit the students career-wise. "Winning a medal at a competition like this makes for a very good addition to their CVs."

Turner says the students underwent a lot of intensive training in the weeks leading up to the competition and demonstrated "a huge amount of commitment and dedication".

Five of the eight students have been selected to compete in the Salon Culinaire Food and Hospitality Competition which is being held in Christchurch next week. They will be competing for 'South Island Junior Waiter of the Year' and although the classes the students will be competing in are different to those in Invercargill, Turner says he has "high hopes" for Tai Poutini.

The students are one-third of the way through their training for a National Certificate in Hospitality and Tourism and are also enjoying demonstrating their skills to diners at Tutoro, Tai Poutini's training restaurant in Greymouth.

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About Tai Poutini Polytechnic:

Tai Poutini Polytechnic (TPP) offers a range of exciting programmes including outdoor education, ski patrol, ecotourism, jade and hard stone carving, professional chef and civil construction. Tai Poutini Polytechnic has campuses in Auckland, Cambridge, Christchurch, Wanaka, Invercargill, Westport, Greymouth, Reefton and Hokitika. In 2009 TPP offers programmes at Greymouth, Reefton, Westport and Hokitika Campuses with no tuition fees* (* conditions apply).