Ki Uta Ki Tai: From the Mountains to the Sea
Volunteer Week 11-14 April, 2014

Ki Uta Ki Tai: From the Mountains to the Sea volunteer week took place 11-14 April with the four environmental groups: Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka, River Estuary Care: Waikouaiti – Karitane, East Otago Taiāpure Management Committee and Hawksbury Lagoon. This year they welcomed around 13 student volunteers from the University of Otago and the Otago Polytechnic alongside many helpers from the local community.

The student volunteers were an awesome bunch of people, enthusiastic and eager to get their hands dirty with some hard work! They were accommodated at Puketeraki Marae in Karitane which was a positive addition to their overall volunteer experience. Student volunteers ranged from disciplines such as Forestry, Physical Education, Science Communication and Outdoor Education, each with a passion for the environment, the outdoors and working with communities.

The volunteers came to ki uta ki tāi as individuals but left as a whānau, meeting new people and making new friends along the way. The beauty of this program is not only the incredible work that is done by the volunteers, but what they themselves get from it also; friendship, kinship, family, and a sense of belonging.

Image above: Volunteers meet and greet over some plant potting up with the rūnaka.

The student volunteers visited one of the community groups each day in the field. On Friday they were with Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka, Saturday they worked with River Estuary care, on Sunday they were with Hawksbury Lagoon and Monday was work with the East Otago Taiāpure.
Volunteer and Karitane local Waiariki Parata-Taiapa joins senior students from Karitane School to carry out meter square surveys with East Otago Taiapure. Tamariki and volunteers learnt about the different wildlife in our estuary identifying what kinds of things could be found at three sites of the estuary.
Feedback from Volunteers

"There is a unique beauty about the ki uta ki tai program. Twice a year it brings together four community groups each with their own objectives and goals, but who come together for the one kaupapa of reviving our whenua (lands) and moana (seas). Adding to the mix we welcome a group of volunteers each with their own agendas, passions and backgrounds. The beauty of our volunteer week is how well all these different people are able to come together; work as one and develop a real sense of belonging and connection both to place and to people. I feel blessed to meet new and like-minded people, developing new friendships and solidifying old ones". – Nā Chanel Phillips

"I really enjoyed working in the rain brought back good farming times and it reminded me more of home to be honest". – Nā Tracy Finlayson

"I've just got some values that I would like to share that I thought were expressed today. So the first one is kotahitanga cause we all came together and worked well as a team, was real rewarding to see and once again no one complained. The second one is manaakitanga for the hospitality that was provided for us and the kai that we all helped to make just before it was beautiful and the third one is just, or not a value but Tangaroa for the time that we spent out in the ocean today I love like feeling how fierce he is but then really kind and playful when we got to catch the waves and the last one is just aroha cause my heart is filled to the brim". – Nā Jess Massey

"The more important point is that we’re creating that aroha and that community that kotahitanga and yea we’re looking after the environment suppose it’s just being aware and maybe just trying to think how we can make it better in the future". – Nā Tom Mcfarlane

"This weekend’s just been such a great opportunity especially because growing up in the city I never had ever planted really anything". – Nā Moyra Bell