

MEDIA RELEASE

August 2009

A 21-year-old university student from Bridgetown has been named the 2009 Rural Ambassador.

Kayecy Ward was raised on her family's farm 15km south of Bridgetown at Yornup which was cleared by hand by her grandfather 50 years ago.

As a child Kayecy was determined to follow in her father and grandfather's footsteps and work the land but her father John felt farming was not the right choice for a girl and encouraged her to pursue tertiary studies.

"My dad is very traditional. He does not think farming is a girl's profession. Dad's father died when he was 16 and he had to take over the farm. Dad saw the farm as a trap for me, he would have preferred to be an accountant and thought I could do more with myself than farming."

An early ambition to study veterinary science fell by the wayside after observing cows being pregnancy tested. "It's not like Harry's Practice," she jokes.

Kayecy spent a year at agricultural school at Harvey in preparation for Muresk but soon realised her hands on farming skills were already up to scratch and she opted instead to enrol in a bachelor of education degree at Edith Cowan University at Bunbury.

While education is her passion Kayecy has lost none of her enthusiasm for farming. The family farm has weathered volatile conditions through diversification.

"Dad may be traditional in some areas but when it comes to agriculture he is very progressive. Fifteen years ago, he realised that the farm needed to diversify and at different times we have gone into Texels, vegetable crops and flowers including proteas and Boronia."

"We have tried a range of different markets. Many markets are volatile and short lived. Sticking with one for too long can be a farmer's downfall.

Now part of the farm's core business is contracting services such as hay rolling, hay baling, seeding, paddock preparation and spraying.

Her love of rural life meant studying in Perth was out of the question and a three hour commute to the campus in Bunbury has been a small price to pay to stay close to her family, local community and her horse Eleazar Showstopper, a three and a half purebred Arabian.

Kayecy hopes to teach high school students and intends to stay in regional WA: "It's a beautiful environment. Staff get involved in building community spirit both within schools and the wider community," she said.

As part of her prize, Kayecy will represent The Royal Agricultural Society of WA at the 2009 Smoke Free Perth Royal Show. She will receive \$1000 prize money from sponsor ANZ, represent WA in the national competition to be held in Melbourne next year and attend a study tour to Edinburgh.

The President of The RAS, Tony Devitt, said that this year's five finalists were very impressive and articulate young people with a passion for their regional communities.

"The Rural Ambassador competition gives our young rural leaders the opportunity to network, further their education and represent WA at a national level," he said.

Kayecy can be contacted on 0408 943 487

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The 2009 Smoke Free Perth Royal Show is presented by The Royal Agricultural Society of Western Australia
Saturday, September 26 to Saturday, October 3

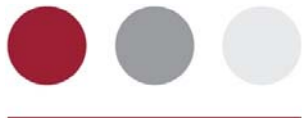


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