

Marg's dedication won't be forgotten

By Brodie Owen

MARG Dennis is an institution. After more than four decades of service at Wagga Base Hospital, Ms Dennis retired yesterday, ending a remarkable innings as a nurse, an educator and, importantly, a life saver.

She joined the hospital fresh-faced in 1970 following her training at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney.

"My first patient here was somebody who was badly burnt," said Ms Dennis.

"I found my niche in emergency nursing and I loved it.

"Nursing was something that was in me."

The hospital's former general manager, Doctor Joe McGirr, said Ms Dennis always lent a sympathetic ear and applied more than a touch of personality in her role.

"It would not be an exaggeration to say there are many people in the Riverina who owe their lives to what Marg has done," he said.

"The patient really drives her to follow everything through to the last detail.

"There is no question in my mind that Marg has always been there for the patient."

Dr McGirr said Ms Dennis' departure leaves a "big gap in the hospital".



FORTY YEARS: Marg Dennis calls it a day at Wagga Base Hospital. Picture: Addison Hamilton

departure leaves a "big gap in the hospital".

"It is a sad day for health services," he said.

"But the spirit Marg lives on – the standards she sets lives on."

Ms Dennis is passionate about medical education and in 2005 became one of the first nurse practitioners in regional NSW.

"One of the highlights has been watching young men and women in the nursing profession progress to the top of their field," she said.

"There are young people coming through that will take us into the future very, very well."

Ms Dennis applauded the redevelopment of the hospital due for completion by late 2015.

"It will be something this community rejoices in," she said.

"I might sneak back and just have a look at what might have been if I'd stayed around."

NEWS BRIEFS

Ballot for Gallipoli commemorations

RIVERINA residents wanting to attend 2015 Anzac Day commemorations in Gallipoli are being urged to apply for the ballot now. Places are being made available to 8000 Australians, 2000 of them are for special representatives such as direct descendents, the veteran community and high school students. The ballot closes at midnight on January 31 and applicant will be notified of the outcome in March. For more information visit the website, www.gallipoli2015.dva.gov.au

Wagga 'angel' named volunteer of the year

WAGGA'S Melina Skidmore has been announced as the Community Volunteer Award winner in the 2013 NRMA Helping People Awards. Ms Skidmore set up the charity Angels for the Forgotten – which is dedicated to giving dignity, hope and joy to the Wagga community's most vulnerable – three years ago. NRMA local director Graham Blight said Ms Skidmore had contributed a lot to the Riverina community.

ADVERTISING FEATURE

A COUNTRY PRACTICE FOR A COUNTRY BOY

An interview with Dr Shaun Foster, former UNSW Wagga Wagga Campus medical student, and current medical intern at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital

Born in Geelong, Victoria and raised in Cootamundra, NSW, Shaun Foster is a true country boy who has always dreamed of being a doctor. After spending the three final years of his medical degree studying at UNSW's Rural Clinical School in Wagga Wagga, he's achieved that dream. He now works at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital and plans to stay in the country to work as a doctor. Shaun takes some time out to chat about why he relishes country life.

What are the best things about living in the country?

Country folk are always so friendly, entertaining and approachable. I think those traits become part of our identity – an identity that's shaped by our rural lifestyle.

I enjoy seeing familiar faces everywhere I go, and saying hello to strangers as I walk past them – that's much harder to do in big cities. I also love playing sport, bush-walking and outdoors activities, and Wagga is great for those things.

What are the best things about studying at UNSW's Medicine Program in Wagga?

Wagga has a lot to offer medical students in training. Some of these are: first-class facilities for academic study and skills workshops; specialists who are generous and dedicated to teaching in a wide variety of specialties; and unlimited access to Wagga Wagga Base Hospital, with its strong culture of teaching and training for medical

students and junior doctors.

How does studying at UNSW's Rural Clinical School broaden your understanding of rural healthcare issues?

UNSW's Rural Clinical School offers a learning experience that is undoubtedly influenced by rural experience. The curriculum is delivered by clinicians who have practiced in both metropolitan and rural areas, and so the themes and experiences of both are reflected in the teaching.

Specific projects and learning modules are included to broaden understanding of many issues such as rural and remote health, Indigenous and refugee healthcare in rural settings, and of course, the core medical topics.

Does studying at the Wagga campus inspire you to be a doctor in the country?

The three years spent at the UNSW's Rural Clinical School, as well as in my first year of my internship at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital, has laid a solid foundation for my career in rural healthcare. I'd always planned to practise in the country, but studying at UNSW has made me even more certain.

Studying at the Wagga campus has the power to inspire those who may be undecided into choosing a rural pathway.

How does the Rural Clinical School help to improve the quality of healthcare in rural and regional settings, and ensure more doctors practise in the country?

Studying at UNSW's Rural Clinical School has given me a good idea of what rural practice would be like for me in the future. During our studies we worked in a range

of clinical placements such as specialist consulting rooms, GP clinics, hospital wards and district hospitals. I experienced first-hand the way the world of healthcare works out here.

It's fantastic – I wouldn't trade my experience for anything. The downstream effect of this quality of education is that many who study here as students stay as junior doctors, and many who train here as junior doctors stay in the country as qualified specialists in their field of choice.



Dr Shaun Foster gets ready for a busy day at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital. A former student at UNSW's Rural Clinical School in Wagga, Shaun feels that his experience at the school helped shape his decision to practise as a doctor in the country.



Dr Shaun Foster delivers a stinging fast-ball for his team, the Wagga City Cats. On his days off Shaun loves cricket, bushwalking, and other outdoor activities – and he feels that Wagga is the perfect place to enjoy these activities.



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