



BY JEREMY SMITH

Scholarship recipient Penehuia Patterson with New Zealand Institute of Rural Health CEO Robin Steed on receiving her cheque.

These days, students loans quite often prove a sticking point to some university student, but it's a burden that has been somewhat lightened for ex-Matamata resident Penehuia Patterson.

That's because Penehuia (18) was recently named a sole recipient of a \$10,000 undergraduate scholarship awarded by the New Zealand Institute of Rural Health (NZIRH).

Penehuia was schooled in Matamata at Matamata Primary, Intermediate and College and she is about to start her second year of studying towards a Bachelor of Health Science in occupational therapy at Auckland University of Technology (AUT).

She says when she was at school she always involved in many sports and has so far completed a period of work experience here in Matamata.

``It's good because in smaller areas like this, you need to have a wide experience base," Penehuia says.

She is enjoying her studies, which as they progress will allow Penehuia the opportunity for more hands-on work.

NZIRH CEO Robin Steed says annually \$60,000 of scholarships are given out to students, and this time around a field of 50 applicants was whittled down to a final group of 13 recipients, of which Penehuia was one.

Scholarships are open to those who have a background in rural Waikato and can also assist students with accommodation costs.

The 13 were selected by a panel made up of representatives from the Waikato District Health Board (DHB) and education sector.

``When we decide on recipients we look for an all-rounder who is achieving outstandingly, as Penehuia has, and someone who is committed to rural New Zealand.

This is because NZIRH scholarships aim to encourage graduates to then return to work in their chosen fields in the Waikato.

NZIRH was born out of a discussion between the then named University of Auckland and Health Waikato which saw a charitable trust set up to help the institute get off the ground.