

## **Rural villages to ‘touch your heart’**

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Recent development trends in the rural village, such as establishing farmers’ markets, promoting agricultural tourism and entrepreneurial ventures etc., have revitalized the rustic culture of Taiwan’s small towns and villages by injecting elements of fun and spontaneity. Under the Council of Agriculture’s (COA) Small Landlords and Big Tenant-Farmers Program, the younger generation have also begun to play a larger role in the nation’s agricultural sector, marking the start of an era that trumps farming as a new lifestyle. In a similar vein, the Soil and Water Conservation Bureau (SWCB) has launched its Rural Campout Program for College Students, a long-term internship program that solicits new ideas and proposals from college students after they’ve had a real taste of agricultural work. Since the program’s debut in 2011, college students from across the island have demonstrated their eagerness and creativity in the selection process as they vied for a spot in the program. The SWCB was particularly impressed by the Rural Campout Proposals submitted by student applicants, who outlined a number of innovative ways to assist the rural communities that are targeted for revitalization – especially the communities that have previously participated in the SWCB’s Rooting for Education agricultural seminars.

There is no better way to understand the countryside culture than “long stay,” a unique opportunity provided by the SWCB’s Rural Campout Program. No longer confined to a dreary classroom, students will be able to gain hands-on knowledge and experience among real farmers and fishermen. From planting rice seedlings, picking ripe fruit to drafting a marketing proposal, participants will be learning in Mother Nature’s classrooms this time around, bouncing off community betterment ideas with fellow teammates and local residents all summer long. An officer of the SWCB explained that the program was built upon the concept of “migration,” in the hopes that these students will one day return to the rural village upon graduation or professional work, bearing the talent, energy and creativity needed to revitalize the countryside.

The purpose of the Rural Campout Program has always been to foster a new generation of self-motivated, group-oriented individuals who will bring new energy and ideas to the nation’s agricultural sector. Moreover, introducing these youngsters to the countryside ensures that the abundance of folk wisdom will continue to be passed on into the hands of future generations.

(Data Source: Council of Agriculture)

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