

**INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE – BEMIDJI AREA  
2017 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SPECIALIST OF THE YEAR  
LTJG SHELBY FOERG**

**Introduction:**

The 2017 Environmental Health Specialist (EHS) of the Year for the Bemidji Area Indian Health Service (BAIHS) is LTJG Foerg. LTJG Foerg is recognized for the leadership, dedication, mentoring and professionalism that substantially elevated environmental health services to the Bemidji Area Tribes. She has proven herself numerous times throughout the year and most noteworthy was her dedication and leadership on area wide initiatives that included the implementation of Integrated Pest Management in childcare environments and Active Managerial Controls in food service facilities.

**Professionalism:**

As the BAIHS, Division of Environmental Health Services (DEHS), Staff Environmental Health Specialist, LTJG Foerg provided environmental health (EH), environmental sustainability, Institutional EH and Injury Prevention services and support services to the federal and tribal EH staff serving over 120,000 American Indians in a tri-state area. She has served admirably while assisting and leading field and tribal EH staff with cross training; supporting numerous team surveys; compiling program related data and developing training materials and guidance documents. In addition, she is the lead point of contact with responsibilities for direct EH service to two Tribes.

LTJG Foerg is a self-starter and blossoming leader. In 2017, she actively pursued opportunities to develop herself and the junior staff through cross training and mentoring. LTJG Foerg spent several days cross training and mentoring two EH staff (federal and Tribal). In addition, she served as a Preceptor to our JrCOSTEP.

LTJG Foerg willingly accepts and delivers on additional duties and responsibilities. Her collateral duties included:

- Founder and lead of the Bemidji Area Green Team; tasked by the Bemidji Area Director to reduce our environmental impact while prioritizing initiatives that increase efficiency, promote employee health and are cost effective. Accomplishments in the past year alone included composting 250 pounds of food waste, which is equivalent to a 250 lb. reduction in carbon emissions. In addition, she led the promotion and collection of e-waste amounting to nearly 200 lbs. recycled.
- As a DEHS EH Recruiter, LTJG Foerg made two site visits to accredited EH programs and made meaningful contact with over 50 EH students.
- LTJG Foerg led the OEH&E workshop planning committee and the fall DEHS staff retreat.
- LTJG Foerg was a member of our Tribal Food Sovereignty Work Group and the EH staff Training and Competency Work Group, producing area guidance documents, checklists and identified staff resources.

LTJG Foerg has bolstered her technical credibility through professional credentialing that includes Registered Environmental Health Specialist, Certified Playground Safety Instructor, Certified Aquatic Facilities Operator and Certified ServSafe Instructor.

LTJG Foerg provided critical assistance in covering for two EHS vacancies that left a backlog of work. The environmental health and safety assessments completed by LTJG Foerg covered a wide range of facility types: restaurants, casinos, hotels, the Bemidji Federal Building, health care facilities, swimming pools and community water and sewer system infrastructure. She also provided assistance in conducting food safety trainings, housekeeper's training, and itinerate food surveys at several Pow-Wows. Going beyond her normal scope of work, LTJG Foerg was directly involved in completing 62 environmental health assessments of varying complexity and scale. She provided food safety, respiratory protection, general safety and infection control training to 78 participants. Providing these services required working extended hours, traveling and working over weekends. Being able to step in and cover for senior environmental health staff speaks to LTJG Foerg's dedication, maturity and overall technical abilities.

### **Special Accomplishments:**

LTJG Foerg led the development and implementation of active managerial controls in food service establishments. This targets the reduction of violations with the greatest potential to cause foodborne illness and align with the 2016-2020 Environmental Surveillance Performance Measures. She researched the effectiveness of this approach, developed a guidance document and assessment forms that are scalable to a national level, presented the concept to the team and proposed an implementation plan. With this process in place goals have been set on targeted food service facilities and the evaluation is ongoing through WebEHRs. With this accomplishment, she broadly implemented the 10 essential EH services with a proven strategy to improve long-term compliance of critical risk factors associated with our national performance measures.

LTJG Foerg led a project to implement integrated pest management (IPM) in Tribal Head Start Programs that reduced pesticide and pest exposures in child learning environments. After receiving specialized IPM training, she applied her knowledge by cross training EH staff and developing a fillable PDF assessment form for field application. During her assessments, she discussed various strategies with program managers and provided formal detailed reports for the nineteen IPM assessments initially completed. In eight of the follow-up assessments, she noted substantial improvements. Numerous environmental health risk factors were mitigated through her efforts to work with the Tribal employees. Additionally, she identified opportunity to alter service contract agreements that will further reduce pesticide exposures by limiting excessive and unnecessary application.

### **Summary:**

LTJG Foerg has exemplified dedication, professionalism, leadership and mentoring as an Environmental Health Specialist for the BAIHS, DEHS. Her special accomplishments are proven "best practices" transferable to other DEHS programs. Her past year has been marked by noteworthy dedication through credentialing, collateral duties and the provision of staff development and vacancy coverage. The BAIHS, DEHS proudly recognizes LTJG Foerg as our 2017 Environmental Health Specialist of the Year with nomination to the IHS, EHS of the year.