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This summer, I had an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to spend the summer working for the Indian Health Service in Tempe, AZ, as a Junior COSTEP intern. I wouldn't call it necessarily work either. It was more like a paid vacation. On the days not in the office, I was out travelling around the state of Arizona, getting paid to do things that I actually enjoyed doing. And the best part of the internship was that I actually got to use what I have been learning in my classes.

The work environment at my office, the Western Arizona District Office was very comfortable and laid-back, yet very driven. My preceptor, Vince Garcia, has got to be the best boss to have. Vince took me under his wing and has taught me things that don't just apply to environmental health, but also professional advice and life lessons. I have truly gotten to know my boss, and am glad to be able to call him a personal friend and possible future supervisor. This summer and internship would not have been as good, I don't think, without having Vince as my boss. My other co-workers were amazing as well. Everyone has treated me with not only respect and like I know what I am doing (even if I didn't!), but also as a friend. I feel that this office has to be the best in IHS simply because of the professional and personal relationships that the EHO's and engineers have with each other.

As for the actual internship and fieldwork itself, it was what I expected and beyond. Vince had a busy workload for me to complete, and we spent many days working well past the 8-5 time frame. I did many different things for my internship. I had 3 projects to work on, as well as get some field experience doing sanitary surveys.

The first project that I worked on was compiling and obtaining various environmental health ordinances/laws/codes that each of the tribes have. The hardest part was obtaining the copies of the ordinances. Some tribes do not even have food ordinances, let alone other environmental ordinances. If they have ordinances in place, some even didn't know that they have them. This has made the project challenging because I was constantly trying to track down tribe members, or wait for return phone calls, just to find out that there isn't even an ordinance in place. I focused on four major types of ordinances: food, solid waste, animal control, and traffic safety. Our goal with this project was to have a better idea of what kind of laws and codes that each tribe we serve follows. This will help us to



Stick'n chickens in Yuma for West Nile Virus

better serve them. We also want to be able to have copies of the laws on hand for surveys to help us better justify why we are doing what we are doing.

The second project that I began work on was putting together a standard of procedure for West Nile Virus sentinel chicken monitoring. We have several flocks of chickens in the Fort Yuma Service Unit, which are kept for the purpose of monitoring for West Nile Virus presence in the area. My goal was to formulate a SOP in order to have a procedure that can be easily duplicated by other IHS service units. The SOP included site location of the flocks, the proper PPE for collecting specimen samples, the actual procedure for collecting blood samples of the chickens, and the justification for using sentinel chicken monitoring. This will also be used in future presentations for tribes that want to incorporate this procedure in their own West Nile Virus monitoring.

The third project that I worked on this summer was finishing a tribal traffic safety survey that another COSTEP compiled last summer. I worked with Rob Morones, District Injury Prevention Coordinator, in re-evaluating the survey and editing the project by analyzing the data closer, crunching numbers, and editing the report. The survey highlights what kind of traffic safety laws that each of the tribes has that the Phoenix Area serves.

A big portion of my time this summer was spent in the field, usually with Vince. I was often traveling throughout the state of Arizona to the reservations of the tribes that we serve, in order to do various tasks and surveys. I completed many food inspection surveys, and have even done a few on my own. I also participated in some mosquito trapping for one tribe, in order to monitor for West Nile Virus. I inspected a few pools and spas as well with Dacia Quick, Environmental Health Specialist for the Phoenix Service Unit. I have also gotten to inspect a few day cares, as well as an entire hotel. I'm very glad that I was able to do sanitary surveys like this, because it really hit home on



In Supai, at the Havasupai Falls

what I have learned in classes.

I was also able to teach a class on food safety, with the help of my roommate and other COSTEP Simon Roberts. This was a good experience because it helps fortify what I have learned in food safety class, and also was good to be able to see if I could be able to stand up in front of people and teach. The class went really well, and 23 people attended, a record number for that particular tribe.

The highlight of my summer experience was getting to spend a week down in the Grand Canyon, in the village of Supai. I spent 5 days there. I had to hike 8 miles down into the canyon, live in the village where there are no roads or cars, and everything has to be either flown in by helicopter or walked in by mule. I got to conduct a few surveys in the few places that they had (1 café, 1 general store, 1 health clinic), as well as teach the class on food handlers safety. It was really cool to know that what I was doing was helpful to the tribe because the tribe relies on tourism to survive, and therefore food safety is a big thing for the tribe. If one tourist gets sick, it could hurt their livelihood.

Another big part of my job was attending meetings with the tribes. Vince and I would often attend environmental meetings when we would be out on a reservation, not only for input, but also to make our presence known and that we are here to help.

Overall, I think that a COSTEP internship is a great thing. It has definitely helped me prepare for a possible career here in the IHS or with the PHS. It was not only an opportunity for a great paying job for the summer, but it was an opportunity to help me grow intellectually with my skills, as well as professionally. I want to thank everyone that I've met this summer and worked with, for helping guide me along and teach me many things that I know will someday be useful to me in my career. Vince was an excellent preceptor and mentor, and allowed me to use my skill knowledge to do things on my own. I can't thank him enough for everything he's done for me. Also, thanks again to my co-workers in WADO. Everyone there has treated me like one of the crew, and like a friend. And thanks to Matt Daulton and Simon Roberts, the two other COSTEP's that made this experience a whole lot easier. I would recommend this opportunity for any student, and as for a career path.