

ENS Tristian Strait
Jr. COSTEP Summer 2009
Missouri Southern State University-Joplin, MO
Maniilaq Association
Kotzebue, Alaska

My name is Tristian Strait, and I am an environmental health major at Missouri Southern State University in Joplin, Missouri. I first learned of the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) during the University career fair last fall which welcomed several representatives from the USPHS. After listening to the presentation and visiting with each one of them during dinner, I realized my interest in pursuing a career in the public health field. A major career goal of mine is to find an organization where I can grow within the organization by increasing my knowledge and skills to better serve. This would include opportunities working with diverse groups of individuals in a variety of settings. When I received a forwarded e-mail detailing the possibility to be selected as a Jr. COSTEP in rural Alaska I knew it was my chance and applied. After filling out all the proper forms and talking with a variety of people, I was selected to do my Jr. COSTEP based out of Kotzebue, Alaska.



Kotzebue, Alaska is located on the Baldwin Peninsula 33 miles north of the Arctic Circle on Alaska's western coast. While working for the Indian Health Service, our environmental health office worked directly with Maniilaq Association which provides health, social and tribal services to northwest Alaska.

My Jr. COSTEP experience in rural Alaska was very eye opening and rewarding. When I first arrived in Alaska I had no idea what the public health concerns were; however now that I have spent 3 months in rural Alaska working under my preceptor LTJG Racheal Lee I've become familiar with relative public health concerns for parts of northwest Alaska. Our environmental health office worked with the city of Kotzebue and 11 surrounding villages in northwest Alaska. While working with the city and villages, we conducted health clinic surveys, rabies vaccination clinics, investigated dog bites, updated the rabies database, consumer confidence reports, Maniilaq Association food services survey, sanitary training for village solid and honey bucket waste disposal workers, sanitary surveys of village water treatment systems, updated MSDSs, and worked in the Alaska state certified Maniilaq Association water lab. I also assisted Sr. Institutional Environmental Health Consultant Bruce M. Etchison with a methyl Methacrylate survey and Radiation survey. The experience I obtained while in Alaska gave me hands on application of the tools I have learned



while in school and providing rewarding work, new friendships with environmental health officers and more

From my experience as a Jr. COSTEP located in Kotzebue, AK I would recommend a Jr. COSTEP to anyone interested in pursuing a career in the USPHS, a student who needs to obtain a required internship for their degree, or to someone who is looking for an exciting summer internship with many learning opportunities encapsulating a broad spectrum of environmental health issues. My experience was second to none.

I will never forget and will always carry this experience with me for the rest of my career. I believe that my JR. COSTEP will be a great building block for the start of my career.