

**ENS Wesley Fowler**  
**Jr. COSTEP Summer 2011**  
**East Central University**  
**Woodrow Wilson Keeble Memorial**  
**Health Care Center**  
**Sisseton, South Dakota**

My name is Wesley Fowler. I am currently working towards a Bachelors of Science in Environmental Health at East Central University in Ada, OK. I plan to complete my degree requirements in December of 2011.

I first became interested in the Jr. COSTEP program after listening to my fellow classmates speak of their amazing experiences in the program. I then spoke with one of my professors, Dr. Patrick Bohan, who is a retired Captain from the U.S. Public Health Service. He answered all of my questions and explained the opportunities that the COSTEP program had to offer. After hearing him speak about the service, I knew right away that I wanted to pursue this path. His guidance was invaluable during the long application process. With a little patience and perseverance I was able to complete all of the paperwork required. After a phone interview, I was contacted by CAPT Chris Allen from the Aberdeen Area office. He informed me that I had been selected for an internship at the Sisseton service unit on the Lake Traverse reservation. The Lake Traverse reservation is approximately 1,500 square miles. This area serves as the homeland of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate tribe (SWO). The SWO are two combined bands and two subdivisions of the Santee Dakota (Sioux) people. A couple of months later I received my official personnel orders and reported for duty on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June. At that time I met my preceptor, LCDR Martin Stephens as well as numerous other people I would work with over the summer.



The majority of the summer I preformed institutional surveys, LCDR Stephens and I looked at several different types of facilities including; casinos, hotels, restaurants, convenience stores, maintenance facilities youth centers, summer school programs, playgrounds, and pow-wow's. It was very exciting to put the knowledge and skills I had acquired during school to work in the real world. In addition to performing surveys, I was able to lead two food handlers' safety courses; one for all of the pow-wow vendors, and the other included food service employees from different areas of the reservation. I had the opportunity to look into residential issues as well, including several mold reports and a vector control issue. When I was not in the field, my time was spent working on reports for the surveys that I had completed earlier. I also had the chance to

travel to Fargo, ND to attend a training workshop on the Biology and Control of Insects and Rodents: Integrated Pest Management. This training was a joint effort between IHS, NEHA and the CDC. The best part of my experience was attending the Wacipi's (Pow-Wow). I found the customs and culture to be enriching as well as educational; it is an experience that I will not soon forget.

Injury prevention is another important aspect of Public Health that I was fortunate to participate in during my COSTEP. Under the direction of Shannon White Thompson, I was able to perform seatbelt and speed surveys in several different areas on the reservation. I was surprised to see that the seatbelt usage on the reservation was much lower than the national average, but they were much higher than the Aberdeen Area Average.

The surveys serve as a way to gauge the effectiveness of injury prevention education and enforcement work that targets occupant restraint use. The data collected aids in acquiring funding for traffic safety from IHS, BIA, and CDC. I worked closely with the SWO police department and Indian Highway Safety Officer Isaiah Soldier, collecting data during traffic safety checkpoints consisting mainly of DUI and seatbelt enforcement.



My experience here was much more than I could have ever expected. I have gained a great deal of hands on experience that will better prepare me for the future. During my time is Sisseton, I have learned about the Sioux culture and their way of life. I feel greatly honored to be selected for the COSTEP program. I would like to thank IHS for sponsoring me, as well as my preceptor, LCDR Martin

Stephens and Shannon White Thompson for providing the necessary guidance that enabled me to complete all the required work. I would encourage all students thinking of joining the Public Health Service or those pursuing a degree in Environmental Health; to strongly consider the Jr. COSTEP program. It is a decision that you will not regret, I could not imagine having a better summer experience!

