

**ENS Mary Schneider
Jr. COSTEP 2012
Illinois State University
Reno District Office
Sparks, Nevada**

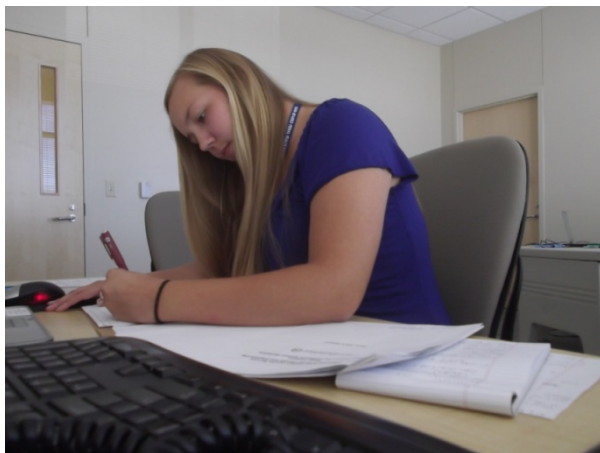
My name is Mary Schneider and I am currently a senior at Illinois State University (ISU) studying Environmental Health. At ISU, we are required to complete a professional practice internship in order to graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Health. I learned about the Jr COSTEP program from retired USPHS CAPT George Byrns, one of my professors. I was fascinated and immediately knew that I wanted to complete a Jr. COSTEP.



I began the application process in the early winter of 2011. Despite the challenges faced throughout the application process, I did not get discouraged. The complications were well worth it once I received the call informing me that I would be spending my summer working with the Phoenix Area Indian Health Service in the Reno District Office of Environmental Health and Engineering.

Shortly thereafter, I was contacted by my preceptor, LT Jason Hymer, Reno District Injury Prevention Coordinator. LT Hymer provided me with a lot of information about my future internship, such as living arrangements, typical daily activities, and possible projects I would work on over the summer. After a short delay in my orders being cut, I finally departed for Reno.

I was a bit nervous going into the office on my first day, but everyone was very welcoming and friendly! They made me feel right at home. My first week in the office was mostly spent going through orientation and learning about the USPHS, IHS and Injury Prevention. Afterwards I was put right to work! Within my first two weeks, I assisted with a food service survey, a water treatment plant survey, and a food handlers training course. By my third week I was traveling all over northern Nevada conducting rabies clinics with USPHS veterinarian CDR Brianna Skinner and EHO LTJG John Hansen. It was a lot of fun working with new people and getting to see Nevada's beautiful mountains.



Throughout the summer I was able to assist with numerous environmental health surveys, including Summer Food Programs, a health clinic, convenience stores, and a residential youth facility. I had the opportunity to attend Level I training for Injury Prevention and meet some really great people. I also took on an Injury Prevention project over the summer collecting injury surveillance data. I spent many, many hours reviewing medical charts and organizing data collected from these charts. My work will assist LT Hymer in his ongoing work to identify an effective and sustainable injury surveillance system for tribes in Nevada.

I love traveling, and have had many opportunities to do so this summer. The Reno District Office serves 32 tribes across Nevada, Utah, and the Owens Valley area of California. I was lucky enough to be able to visit 13 of the 32 reservations, including Ft. Duchesne, Ibapah, Ely, Duckwater, Pyramid Lake, Lee, Wells, Elko, Battle Mountain, Yerington, Fernley, Fallon, and Benton. I also did some recreational travel on my free time. I visited Lake Tahoe numerous times, as well as Denver, Flaming Gorge, San Diego, and Yosemite National

Park. Seeing mountains on a daily basis is a luxury that I don't have in my hometown of Chicago. I have continuously been awed by the spectacular scenery of the West.

I have learned a lot about the field of environmental health, as well as about myself throughout these last 12 weeks. I have grown as a professional and an individual. The work I have done throughout the summer has been very rewarding; it is very satisfying to know that I have helped make a difference in the lives of others. My experience this summer has confirmed my previous consideration of pursuing a career with IHS. It has been an incredible experience and I recommend a Jr COSTEP to anyone that is interested!

