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Jr. COSTEP Summer 2013
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This summer I had the opportunity to participate in the Jr. COSTEP program in Fort Defiance, Arizona on the Navajo Reservation. I go to Baylor University, and am originally from Lexington, Kentucky so this part of the country was new to me. Arriving for my COSTEP was my first time to Arizona and it did not disappoint. I have learned more than I could have hoped this summer. Even though my COSTEP assignment was in Fort Defiance, AZ I lived in an apartment in Gallup, NM and commuted daily to work. This was difficult and often tiring, but it exposed me to even more and allowed me to get more out of my experience this summer.



At a rabies clinic in a nearby community.

The great thing about the COSTEP experience is that every day held something new. My preceptor and everyone at the office were extremely welcoming, kind, and helpful. They truly wanted to help me learn and experience as much as possible. With their help I was able to learn a lot about the field of Environmental Health, the Navajo culture, and many life lessons.

Throughout the internship I participated in many different surveys, trainings, and inspections. During the month of June we rabies clinics were held, which became a bit monotonous, but it was fun to travel to the different communities throughout the service unit and interact with members of the community. In July I taught a food handlers training class and inspected food trailers at the local 4th of July fair. Other work included surveying high school kitchens, a jail, group homes for the mentally handicapped, senior centers, community water systems, and community sewer systems.



Administering the rabies vaccine at a clinic

Through the work we did I was exposed to much of the region and its beauty. Amazingly, the time spent in the field was practically equivalent to time spent in the office. It was great to experience the area first hand learning and gaining experience in Environmental Health. The weekends provided many opportunities to travel and sight-see.

This internship exposed me to some unique topics and circumstances. On the Navajo Nation Plague and Hantavirus are both issues that are monitored. Plague is monitored by observing the prairie dog populations. If there is a die off that shows the fleas that live around the prairie dogs are carrying *Yersinia pestis*, the plague bacterium. With regards to Hantavirus we did work with educating the public on how to deal with mouse droppings,

which is how the disease is transmitted to humans. Exposure to these topics helped me to broaden my view of this field and will surely be valuable in the future.

Overall, my Jr. COSTEP was a fantastic experience. I have learned more than I could have hoped for, and have been exposed to so much in the field of environmental health. I feel prepared to go back to school and excel because of the knowledge and mindset I have gained from this internship. I highly recommend looking into the Jr. COSTEP program.