

**ENS Devon Anderson  
Jr. COSTEP Summer 2013  
Western Carolina University  
Phoenix Area, Western Arizona District Office  
Tempe, Arizona**

My name is Devon Anderson. This coming year I will be a senior at Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, North Carolina. I'll be graduating in May of 2014 with my Bachelors of Science in Environmental Health. This summer I had the privilege of serving as an intern for the U.S. Public Health Service and the Indian Health Service. This experience has been life changing to say the least.

My duty station is located roughly 2,000 miles from my home town of Weaverville NC, so I was a little apprehensive about being that far from home for a whole summer. However, once I got to Arizona the apprehension I had originally quickly dwindled. I was excited to meet my roommate (another COSTEP Intern) and my preceptor, CDR Vince Garcia. I was also looking forward to seeing the area and the beautiful sites Arizona has to offer.

It didn't take long to get into the swing of things and I hit the ground running. My preceptor thankfully had a jam-packed summer planned for me. When I first started college I was a nursing major with a dream of becoming a nurse practitioner. I could answer any question you asked about how to get where I wanted to be and what was involved to get there. Well, that all changed when I found Environmental Health (ENVH). I changed my major to ENVH at the end of my sophomore year because I had fallen in love with it. I don't think there could be a better fit for me, however, when I changed my major I didn't know as much about ENVH as I did about nursing and I also didn't know about all the opportunities available to me with this degree. Everything that I knew about ENVH came from what I'd learned thru class work so when I heard about this internship I immensely desired a position. Little did I know I would fall head over heels for this job and develop a fascination with learning all things about the USPHS and Indian Health Service.

When CDR Garcia gave me my work-plan for the summer I was elated to find I would be doing so many new things! Things that I had never even realized were within the scope of ENVH. One of these that really stood out to me was a rabies vaccination clinic, which consisted of tribal members from a Native American reservation bringing their dogs and cats to our field clinic to vaccinate. When the time came for the clinic I was very pleased to be involved. When you are out on the reservation doing field work you come to realize that every moment you have with the tribal members is a teachable one. It's important to relay your knowledge while you have a listening ear because you might miss the chance to educate.

Another memorable field experience for me was when I learned how to trap mosquitoes to test for West Nile Virus. The first time I went out to do the trapping was the very first time I had ever done this, so I didn't know how any of the equipment worked or how to set it up. I learned it's not hard to set up once you get the hang of it.

I was able to work with many people in the field including LTJG Mistin Ray and CDR Rob Morones. I spent many of my days out in the field with LTJG Ray conducting surveys including food service facilities, casinos, sanitary surveys, and pools. While in Arizona for the summer I worked with CDR Morones, the Injury Prevention Coordinator, for my Elder Fall Project. My project consisted of collecting data from the past three years of elder home assessments and questionnaires completed by



**Respirator fit testing for clinic staff**



**Mosquito trapping in the Fort Yuma Service Unit, Yuma, AZ with Rudy Barajas, Yuma County Pest Abatement District.**

the elders. The purpose of this project was to affirm that the Elder Fall Prevention Program implemented three years ago was doing its job to prevent elder falls. After collecting the data and determining trends I found that the Elder Fall Prevention Program had made progress within those three years in reducing the number of falls and in increasing the safety felt by the elders in their homes.

This summer I also had the opportunity to go to the Havasupai Reservation inside the Grand Canyon for work. I had the pleasure of being there for a full week. It was an 8 mile hike into the Canyon, once inside the canyon I was able to serve the Havasupai tribe that resides there. I trapped mosquitoes, surveyed a jail, and inspected food facilities and a market while there. After work hours, I was able to visit the Havasupai Falls, one of the most statuesque water falls located in the village. It was mind-blowing and beautiful!

This experience has strengthened my decision to switch majors to ENVH and I know 100% I am in the right field. Now that I've had a taste of the USPHS/IHS life, I want more. My goal within the next few years is to obtain my Masters of Public Health degree and to acquire a career with USPHS. As corny as it sounds, this internship and summer have changed my life and it could change yours too. If you're thinking about doing this internship and are unsure, take the first step and apply. There is absolutely nothing to lose by doing this internship and everything to gain.



**(L-R) ENS Josh Turner, ENS Patricia Wrona and ENS Devon Anderson assisting with a rabies vaccination clinic.**