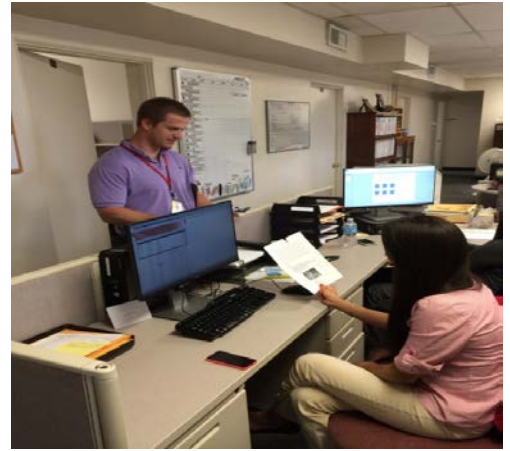


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Jr. COSTEP Summer 2014
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As I neared completion of my Environmental Health program of Eastern Kentucky University, I was anxious to make application of the education I had received. My esteemed professor, Joe Beck, instructed me that the Jr. COSTEP with the USPHS/Indian Health Service would be the perfect opportunity and environment to make application of the knowledge that I had acquired as well as view the environmental health field functioning at its best.



My first day on the job at Phoenix Indian Medical Center I met my preceptor; the man, the myth, the legend, retired Captain Greg Heck. I was fortunate to have such a knowledgeable preceptor who served as a commissioned officer for 30 years with IHS and is now serving as a civil servant. Greg's in depth knowledge and touch of humor made everyday enjoyable. After a warm welcome, the rubber met the road and Greg and I got to work! Immediately, I became involved in taking data from PIMC's flume and generated a Mercury report for the City of Phoenix, as well as I participated in a fire drill to evaluate staff readiness to evacuate a "pretend patient/me" in a horizontal fire evacuation. If that was not enough of a thrill, I was introduced to Terry Nelson (Emergency Preparedness Manager & Security Supervisor) and began working on improving PIMC bomb threat policy! I could quickly tell that I was in for a very exciting summer!

As the summer passed, the variety of tasks I was evolved in was very extensive. The amount of education I received is immeasurable! The summer work plan prepared for me was entailed with a variety of projects; working with occupational safety and health, hazard surveillance, vector control, food safety, and so much more! The ability to work on multiple projects that provided health and safety interventions to people's lives was exactly what I had hoped a career in Environmental Health would be! The full spectrum that the COSTEP provided brought full application to what I had studied in the classroom to real world application, providing opportunity to contribute positively to others lives!

I was able to contribute in providing information that benefited the community in reaching a higher quality of life. For example, I worked in the following areas: OSHA compliance (worksite inspection); work place safety (instructing employees in wearing appropriate PPE); ergonomics (safe patient handling); vector control (mosquitoes sampling); as well as providing citizens with confidence in the public health system by helping monitor consumer safety, (pool monitoring, & food inspections). There were many other opportunities I was a part of and I feel blessed to have been a 2014 JR-COSTEP!

As I look back on all that I was involved in and learned this summer, I believe that a statement from Captain Greg Heck is a true measure of the opportunity that the environmental health field has to offer. "I have worked in this field for forty years and every day I learn something new! The more I learn, the more I realize how much I don't know." This statement is a true reflection of every day I came to work! I learned a lot, but I know that I have a lot more to learn and am excited about the continuous growth the career provides!



I would encourage all individuals to peruse a COSTEP and experience the gift of providing implementation and instruction of health education to communities that IHS serves on a daily bases! I would like to thank all who contributed in my COSTEP; my preceptor-retired Captain Greg Heck, Captain Kenny Hicks, Captain Ricardo Murga, Captain Dave Cramer, Commander Vince Garcia, Lt. Commander Amanda Parris, Lt. Mistin Ray, Lt. Kendra Vieira, Lt Isaac Ampadu, as well as all the COSTEPs, Jessica Porter, Caroline Cleary, Capri Woolridge, and all the staff of PIMC. All of these individuals helped provide education and change to the community that IHS serves and empowers leaders of these communities to implement positive change to the community/world around them that results in achieving helping others to live healthier, happier lives. As Nelson Mandela once said "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world". I do believe that the education the Environmental Health Officers provide does have an immediate impact on the health and happiness of the population it serves.