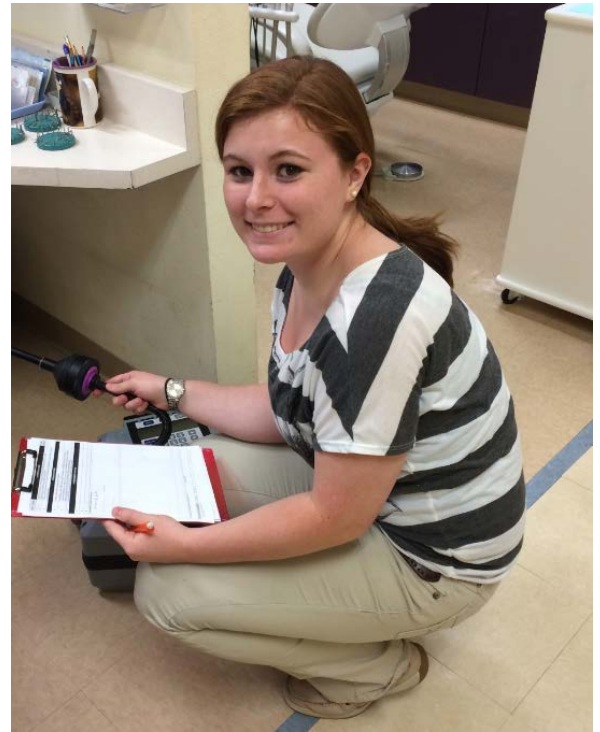


**ENS Caroline Cleary
Jr. COSTEP Summer 2014
Western Carolina University
Phoenix Area Office
Phoenix, Arizona**

Hello, my name is Caroline Cleary and I was the Institutional Environmental Health (IEH) Program JrCOSTEP at the IHS in Phoenix for the summer of 2014. I am an Environmental Health Major and a rising senior at Western Carolina University. WCU has had many former students go through the JrCOSTEP experience and naturally I wanted to be included in the group. Hearing their experiences and stories really motivated me to apply as soon as I could. When I found out that I had earned a spot in this wonderful program, I was ecstatic! I was counting down the days until this new and life changing experience would start.



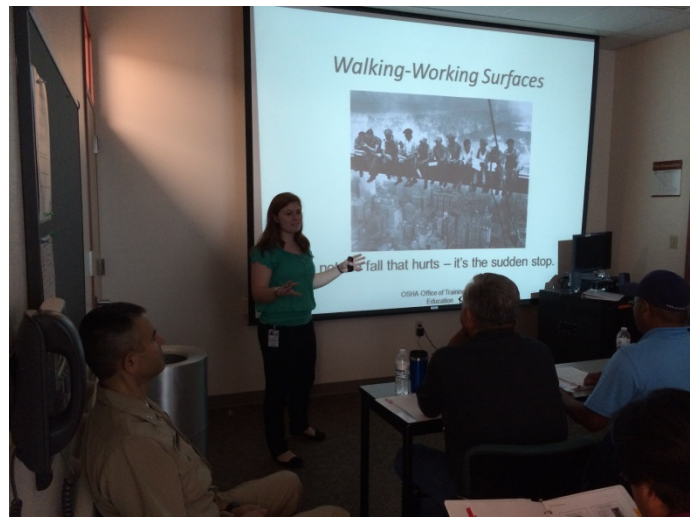
Lets just say, the time I spent out here exceted my expectations. When I first arrived at the office, my preceptor Captain Ricardo Murga was so welcoming and friendly that my nerves just disappeared. I was also given the chance to work with Captain Dave Cramer, and LCDR Amanda Parris on various projects. I really felt like I was apart of the IEH team, and not just a summer COSTEP. The whole summer was a learning experience for me and the knowledge that I learned will be applied to future classes and the work area. The projects I worked on for the summer were very diverse. They ranged from industrial hygiene surveys to environmental health work.

One of the best parts of the internship was the diversity of the places I worked in. In order to perform some of the different environmental health and safety surveys, I got to travel to some pretty awesome places. Some of the indian reservations I was able to go to were Hopi, White Mountain Apache, Fort Mojave, Havasupai, Hualapai, Ak-Chin, Fort McDowell, and Yavapai-Prescott. Outside of the indian reservations, I was able to travel to the Phoenix Indian Medical Center, the Salt River Indian Clinic, and the Parker Indian Medical Center. The surveys I mainly helped conduct consisted of Nitrous Oxide testing, radiation and mercury testing, single patient decontamination inspection, pool inspections, hotel surveys, food establishment surveys, home assessments and much more.



When I went to the Hopi Indian reservation, I was able to teach two one-hour sessions in the OSHA training. I taught the personal protective equipment presentation and the walking and working surfaces presentation. Being able to teach in front of a class full of adults definitely boosted my confidence in public speaking. One of my favorite parts of teaching was seeing how attentive and engaging the class was. During the off hours of the trip, I was able to purchase two kachina dolls. One of my dolls was a dancer, and she was dancing for rain during a ceremony to help the crops grow and provide food for the people. The other doll I purchased was the vendors own art work. The piece was a butterfly that had different colors on each side of the wings. What I took from the explanation is that the butterfly showed how different and beautiful life can be.

One of my favorite trips of the summer was hiking down the Grand Canyon to the Havasupai reservation. We conducted home mold assessments, and a jail inspection. The reason for the home assessments was to help the tribe receive a grant from the Bureau of Indian Affairs to help the mold issue in many homes. This was my first time doing home inspections, and I will never forget the experience. Knowing that I am able to help families create a better and safer living environment makes me more confident and proud of my choice to become an environmental health major and to someday work in this field. On a side note, Havasupai has some of the most beautiful waterfalls I have ever seen.



My summer basically revolved around my RCRA project which I was able to work on when I was not conducting a survey or teaching a class. RCRA requires the safe management of the hazardous waste produced when storing, transporting, and disposing of the material. My goal in this project was to have a status report on the RCRA compliance for all of the health care facilities in the region. This report will give the IEH team an idea of what needs to be done to help these facilities be fully compliant with RCRA. In order to determine their standing, I created a survey form and walked around with the different safety officers or environmental health officers going through the checklist. I also made phone calls to the health care facilities that I was unable to visit in person. Over the course of July, I was able to assess 18 different health care facilities, and I noticed that they were all in different states of compliance. These findings will greatly benefit the Phoenix Area Office and help create an overall compliance plan with all of the health care facilities.

Another project I was assigned to do was to calibrate all of the industrial hygiene equipment in the office. All of the equipment must be calibrated annually to provide accurate results during surveys. In order to complete this assignment, making phone calls was a must. This provided me the opportunity to become confident on my speaking skills while on the phone. Another task to handle was keeping all of the documentation in order. This project created valuable knowledge that I will be able to use in my career.

I could not be more thankful for my experience this summer. The internship has given me a broad view of the Indian Health Service and each day brought new and exciting experiences. I could not have asked my preceptor, Captain Ricardo Murga for a better experience and I truly appreciate the plan he made for me before I arrived and the time he took to invest in my experience. I appreciate the time taken from everyone that I worked with throughout the summer to give me a glimpse of what the Indian Health Service is all about. This experience is one I will talk about for the rest of my life and I encourage uprising students to give the United States Public Health Service JrCOSTEP program some thought. I could not be happier with my decision to spend my summer as a JrCOSTEP.

