ENS Jennifer Kamm
JRCOSTEP Summer 2015
Illinois State University
San Carlos Service Unit
San Carlos, Arizona

Hi, my name is Jenny Kamm! I am originally from LaGrange, Illinois which is about twenty minutes southwest of Chicago. I am currently pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Health at Illinois State University and plan to graduate this coming December. My major requires a nine week internship

Figure 1. ENS Kamm at new duty station office

to graduate. I remember hearing about the opportunity to work for the Indian Health Service in Alaska (and other places) during my freshman year. One of the most attractive parts of the Indian Health Service COSTEP experience was the chance to experience a new landscape and a new culture. My experience has lived well past my expectations.
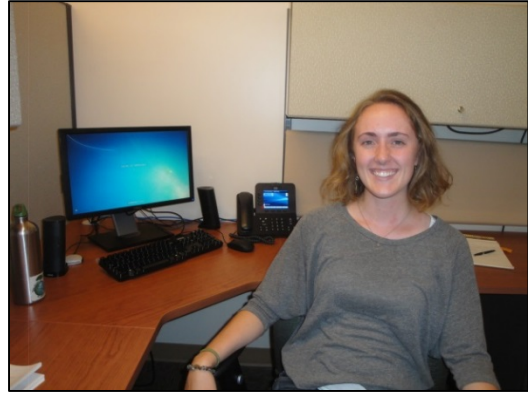
Even though I did not end up in Alaska, I landed the perfect duty station: the San Carlos Service Unit located ~100 miles east of Phoenix. This was my first time in the Southwest and my first time traveling alone. I know that can be a little daunting for many COSTEPs, but I can assure you, it has been well worth the challenge. It has been absolutely thrilling to experience a climate and landscape so different from that of Illinois. Our office serves the San Carlos Apache Tribe, which covers about 1.8 million acres of land and is home to around 15,000 tribal members and non-tribal residents. I had the pleasure of working under Environmental Health Officer José Velascosoltero, my preceptor, for a three month time period in which I learned a great deal about public health, the culture around me, and myself.

Figure 2. ENS Kamm conducting a food inspection

The internship was a perfect taste of what it is like working as an Environmental Health Officer for the Indian Health Service. I knew going into it that this experience would be unique. What makes this internship special is the wide variety of tasks to experience. Some of these tasks include food inspections, swimming pools inspections, teaching food handler classes, conducting seat-belt surveys, running annual rabies vaccination clinics, and working to prevent the spread of infectious diseases such as Rocky Mountain spotted fever (RMSF).

My favorite part of the internship was working with the rabies vaccination clinics. One week into my internship, Jose Velascosoltero and I traveled to the Hopi Reservation to assist with their vaccination clinic. Under the supervision of the veterinarian, I learned to administer the rabies vaccine to both dogs and cats. By the end of the week I had given over 150 vaccinations. I loved being outside all week long touring the communities and gaining hands-on experience.

One of my main responsibilities was my final project. The project is an evaluation of the strategies the Indian Health Service uses to prevent the spread of the very dangerous disease Rocky Mountain spotted fever (RMSF). The control strategies primarily target the free-roaming dog population. So, my project was to produce the current dog population census for the reservation, noting the number of restrained dogs and the number of tick collars in use. I then compared the data to a similar project from 2011, conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the IHS. In my report, I used the results to conclude whether or not the strategies have been effective in reducing the dog population size, amongst other conclusions. It is rewarding to think that IHS will be able to use this information to select effective RMSF prevention strategies.

Figure 3. ENS Kamm administering rabies vaccination

Overall I have felt very fortunate to have experienced such a unique, rewarding, and educational internship. I would highly suggest it to anyone who may be interested. Not only have I had the chance to learn about IHS and environmental health, but I have learned about the wonderfully unique culture of the San Carlos Apache Tribe. I am so thankful for this experience and will remember it fondly for the rest of my life.

Figure 4. ENS Kamm with OEHE staff in front of office