

**ENS Rebekah Abangan
JRCOSTEP Summer 2015
Illinois State University
Sioux City, Iowa**

For the summer of 2015, I was privileged to participate in the USPHS JRCOSTEP program as a Junior Environmental Health Officer in Sioux City, Iowa. This opportunity was introduced to me by my professor, CAPT George Byrns, USPHS (Ret). His encouragement along with the positive remarks from previous Illinois State University JRCOSTEPs motivated me to pursue this experience to fulfill my internship graduation requirement. Prior to my JRCOSTEP experience, I had little knowledge or interest in pursuing a career with the USPHS Commissioned Corps. However, as my time as a JRCOSTEP concluded I found myself actively searching for a career as a Commissioned Officer. This is largely due to my invaluable experiences as a JRCOSTEP and the relationships I was able to build with EH professionals working in the Great Plains Area Indian Health Service.



Biking at Bacon Creek Park in Sioux City, IA

During my three month assignment, I was able to gain exposure to a variety of work experience including: food safety surveys, institutional health assessments, environmental health surveys,



Pow Wow in Flandreau, SD

completion of an epidemiology project, and providing environmental health training to tribal programs. I was able to work under the direction of an excellent preceptor, CDR Mike Reed, Sioux City District Environmental Health Officer. My summer involved traveling to South Dakota and Nebraska to accompany and learn from professionals in the field. The JRCOSTEP program afforded me numerous field work opportunities but with a unique cultural aspect. It was interesting to witness cultural traditions and learn about Native history. I also learned how important understanding the values of the community is to program effectiveness.

While developing my summer work plan, I expressed interest in completing a project related to epidemiology. With this interest in mind, I was provided the opportunity to lead a severe injury epidemiology project involving two tribal communities. The completion of the project was highly rewarding; I was able to accomplish tasks that were both interesting and of high value to a community. After two months of dedicated work, the project resulted in a completed Severe Injury Surveillance (SIS) Profile. Reaching the final product was a challenging and rewarding process. The SIS project helped to improve my writing skills, interpretation of data, teamwork, medical terminology and communication. The project introduced me to injury epidemiology as a whole and taught me a great deal about handling sensitive patient information. I am happy to

leave the JRCOSTEP experience knowing the profile will help support injury prevention efforts in the community.

From the first day I reported as a JRCOSTEP, I was presented with productive tasks and learning opportunities. My expectations for an internship experience were surpassed and I really enjoyed the work. I am proud of the work that I was able to produce during my summer as a JRCOSTEP. The skills and experiences I attained in just three months have given me new confidence in my ability to succeed in the field of environmental health. I would highly recommend the JRCOSTEP program to anyone seeking professional work experience. I was able to gain valuable experience that is unlike any other program I am aware of; this was truly a unique opportunity.



Food safety survey at a Summer Feeding Program