

**ENS Timothy Arr**  
**JRCOSTEP Summer 2015**  
**Missouri Southern State University**  
**Reno District Office**  
**Reno, Nevada**



I am a junior at Missouri Southern State University (MSSU) in Joplin, MO studying Environmental Health and Safety. After learning about the JRCOSTEP program from my advisor and a family member, I knew that this was something I wanted to be a part of, so I was very happy to be selected for a COSTEP assignment with the Reno District Office of Environmental Health & Engineering.

The first week in the office involved orientation with my Preceptor, LTJG Mikayla Deardorff, and also my first food service surveys. In the next few weeks I also participated in Sanitary Surveys of water and wastewater facilities, a variety of food service operation surveys, and Temporary Food Handler's Training courses. Under LTJG Deardorff's leadership, I was able to learn so much in my first weeks regarding food safety and environmental health and safety. She also gave me a great understanding of the typical duties of an IHS EHO and how I could be successful if this was the path that I chose in the future. I had the opportunity to attend an IHS Water Distribution Systems training where we learned the importance of safe drinking water and the water operator's crucial role in maintaining the water supply. The training also provided hands-on work with pipes and other materials used by water operators. As the following weeks progressed, I was able to work with other Environmental Health Officers and Engineers to perform a variety of field work and assist with a reverse osmosis project aimed at addressing elevated arsenic levels in private wells. This opportunity to work with different individuals and categories highlighted the team work that is encouraged within the office and gave me a much broader COSTEP experience.

I was also assigned a project that involved evaluating the District Temporary Food Handler's Training course and related materials to determine effectiveness and opportunities to improve it to reduce critical food safety findings during inspections of temporary food facilities. This project consisted of evaluating course material, gathering participant feedback through a survey, and identifying the most common priority items cited during inspections. I was also able to assist with providing training and conducted food safety surveys during the Ute Tribe's 4<sup>th</sup> of July Powwow, which helped me better evaluate the training and see compliance issues firsthand. I also gained a lot of communication and risk assessment experience, and enjoyed the chance to work with operators one-on-one to find ways to address food safety risks. Working with all the EH staff in the Reno District was very beneficial in allowing me see examples of different approaches to the work and complex problems.



The last full week was spent travelling across the Schurz Service Unit, conducting rabies vaccination clinics in more than a dozen tribal communities where we vaccinated over 370 dogs and cats. I was able to work hands-on with the animals and learned about some of the struggles that many of those communities face in trying to manage animal control issues. This was a great chance to meet community members and explain the importance of vaccinations as part of rabies control and bite prevention. I felt the clinics were a huge success and I am glad that I was able to assist in such a significant public health initiative.



During my internship I also had a chance to travel to many different places off the clock. I was able to visit Dinosaur National Park in Utah, as well as hike Mount Rose in Reno and explore areas surrounding Lake Tahoe. I would like to thank all of the staff in the Reno District for inviting me into their office program and work with welcoming arms and providing me with the knowledge and skills that will help me in decisions for future work. The JRCOSTEP experience can provide hands on environmental health experience. The memories I take with me and the friends I made will definitely last a lifetime.