

ENS Caleb Biles
JRCOSTEP Summer 2016
East Central University
Chinle Service Unit
Many Farms, Arizona

Hi, my name is Caleb Biles, and I am from Ada, Oklahoma. I am a senior at East Central University, which is in Ada, and am pursuing a bachelor's degree in Environmental Health Science. I hope to graduate in May 2017. In order to graduate I am required to complete an internship, so I applied for the JRCOSTEP and was very fortunate to be selected into the program. I had first heard about the program through my professor, CAPT Patrick Bohan, USPHS (Ret).

I reported to Many Farms, Arizona where I worked for the Indian Health Service at the Office of Environmental Health from May 24th to August 12th. Many Farms is located 13 miles north of Chinle, Arizona, and the beautiful Canyon de Chelly, and is part of the Chinle Service Unit. The Chinle Service Unit is right in the middle of the Navajo Reservation, which is roughly the size of West Virginia. I had the honor of working with great people this summer. My preceptor was CDR Donna Gilbert, and I worked with Wilpita Honie, Jim Davis, and Louise Kee were a tremendous help. I learned so much from them, and not only about Environmental Health, but also about the unique Navajo culture. This was my first time on the reservation so all was very new to me. Not only did I have a great experience at work, but I also got the opportunity to travel and explore the surrounding area. For example, I was able to see Monument Valley, The Petrified Forest National Park/Painted Desert, and Canyon de Chelly.

This internship gave me a lot great experience, and a good idea of what it is like being an Environmental Health Officer for the Indian Health Service here on the Navajo Reservation. Throughout this summer I have had the opportunity to do many different things. These included working rabies clinics, looking for prairie dog colonies prior to the Central Navajo Fair, surveying water and sewer systems, inspecting senior centers, schools, pools, and nursing homes, conducting seat belt and car seat surveys, going on home assessment visits, filling out enteric questionnaires, assisting with food handlers training, and helping with monthly chart reviews. In the office I learned how to write survey reports, and how to enter data. I also attended the local IHS Orientation where I learned more of the Navajo culture, and of IHS's mission within the Chinle Service Unit.



ENS Biles conducting a community sewer survey



ENS Biles at a rabies clinic



ENS Biles preparing a rabies vaccine

My favorite part of the internship were the rabies clinics that we did at the beginning of the summer. We provided free rabies vaccination clinics for a total of 11 communities and vaccinated over 1,400 cats and dogs. I learned how to fill syringes with the vaccine, and to administer the shot. I also found enteric disease investigations very interesting, and enjoyed going on them with CDR Gilbert. I learned a lot on these cases firsthand about the characteristics of different pathogenic organisms. I was also able to play a part in the prevention of such enteric diseases by way of educating the infected person and family members concerning the illness. For example, there was a *Shigella* outbreak in the Chinle Service Unit this summer, so I was able to learn more about the organism and how it is transmitted and prevented.

This summer has been an incredible one to say the least. Not only did I learn a lot about being an Environmental Health Officer, but I had the privilege of living in a beautiful new land and experiencing a new and unique culture. I would recommend this internship to anyone who is interested in Environmental Health, IHS, and or the Commissioned Corps of the United States Public Health Service.