

**ENS Trent Mitchell
JRCOSTEP Summer 2016
Illinois State University
Rosebud Service Unit
Rosebud, South Dakota**

My name is Trent Mitchell and I am pursuing a Bachelor's of Science Degree in Environmental Health at Illinois State University. I will be entering my senior year in the Fall of 2015. As part of my graduation requirements, I must complete nine credit hours of professional practice (full time work experience).



Summit of Harney Peak in Custer State Park

I was first introduced to the JRCOSTEP program from my professor, CAPT George Byrns, USPHS (Ret). I've always noticed his USPHS awards hanging in his office and often heard his stories about his time in Alaska. It sounded like a job that he enjoyed and something that made a difference in other peoples' lives.

During the beginning of the fall semester of 2015, I attended an informative presentation about the USPHS from CDR Mike Reed who is an Environmental Health Officer in Sioux City, IA. I was really excited at the opportunity to travel in the summer and work a job that CAPT Byrns and CDR Reed spoke so highly of. I was lucky enough to be chosen for the JRCOSTEP and accepted an assignment to Rosebud, South Dakota which is about 800 miles from my home in Illinois. I was anxious upon my arrival, but was quickly put at ease when I met the awesome staff that immediately made me feel at home.

One of the first tasks I had in Rosebud was to decide on a project to work on throughout the summer. A lot of ideas were discussed, but I ultimately decided on updating the Protocol for Assessing Community Health in Environmental Health (PACE-EH) issue profiles. I was given good directives from the environmental health staff and developed a plan to reach my goal.

PACE-EH is a 13 step community-based program, consisting of members of the community that collaborate regularly to identify, prioritize and plan to address environmental health concerns in their community. This has been a project spanning almost two years, and a significant amount of data in the issue profiles was either absent or outdated. My job was to collect and present those data clearly in the issue profiles so the committee had the best foundation possible to address the issues they identified.

My work on this project was a learning experience in itself. I was able to apply and better develop skills learned in classrooms to the real world, such as technical writing, professionalism in writing and in person, and knowledge of codes and inspection practices. I am proud to have been able to contribute to this project.

In addition to my project, I was involved in numerous public health pursuits that covered areas like food safety and sanitation, occupational health and safety, healthy homes, and many more. I enjoyed the variation of the work we completed in Rosebud, and was introduced to new avenues

of public health and safety like water treatment, foodborne disease outbreak interviewing, and animal vaccinations. All of these ventures gave me a more comprehensive view of environmental health and will inevitably help me navigate my first job after graduation.

An aspect of my professional practice that I am deeply thankful for was the trust to work independently. After an introduction to the area and responsibilities of the environmental health staff, I assisted and observed surveys that eventually gave me the confidence to conduct my own inspections. The guidance offered along the way was helpful and helped me to improve every day. This experience is something that in my opinion sets the JRCOSTEP apart from other internships.

Another aspect that made this summer one I will never forget is the exposure into the culture of the Lakota. Native American culture is something that has interested me since I was a kid, and I was lucky enough to visit museums, read books, attend *Wacipis* (powwows), and just ask questions about the Lakota people. In addition to the history I learned, experiencing the community as it is now was also eye opening. I coached a little league team in the evenings and weekends which was a lot of fun. I hope to share what I have learned about Native American culture with everyone back home.

Exploring the area is something that I was incredibly excited about as well. I made numerous trips up into the Black Hills and in the Badlands. I even did some mountain biking and kayaking in northwestern Nebraska. The natural beauty of the land out here is something that I will never forget.

Concisely, my time in Rosebud, South Dakota as a JRCOSTEP was something that will stick with me for the rest of my life. Being so far away from home by myself and meeting so many great people was incredible. I can honestly say I have grown as a professional and a person. I can't say enough good things about my opportunity to learn here and the quality of people that call Rosebud home. I would highly recommend this opportunity to anyone.



Conducting a food sanitation service survey in the Rosebud Sioux Tribe's Commodity Building