

ENS Yuri Eaves
JRCOSTEP Summer 2016
California State University, Northridge
Redding District Office
Redding, California

During the summer of 2016, I was fortunate to spend my time in Redding, CA as a JRCOSTEP. I am Yuri Eaves a graduate student at California State University, Northridge. My major is Environmental and Occupational Health with a research focus on environmental toxicology. Prior to the COSTEP experience I wasn't well versed on the practical field application of environmental health. With the conclusion of this experience I can say that pursuing a career with USPHS Commissioned Corps would be a great opportunity. As a graduate student I have had my share of professional work experiences however this was by far the best "job" I have had to date. It presented an optimal learning experience because of the diverse topics and hands on experiences gained in a short amount of time. There was never one day where I felt I was doing a repetitive task and not gaining or sharing my knowledge for the betterment of public health.



Entering the Hoopa Valley Tribe

I first heard of the JRCOSTEP from my environmental health professor and mentor, Thomas Hatfield, PhD, REHS, who told me about other students' excellent experiences. After doing my research, I felt that everything Dr. Hatfield had described was accurate and proceeded to apply. The application process was long but completely worth it. Soon I was accepted and was contacted by Ms. Carolyn Garcia, Director, Division of Environmental Health Services, California Area, IHS and received orders to head to Redding, CA. LCDR Molly Madson was my preceptor and made me feel comfortable and confident in the transition to Redding.



Measuring the temperature of homemade ranch dressing in a refrigerator

My first week as a COSTEP was not only good but very organized and productive. I was introduced to the missions of the U.S. Public Health Service and Indian Health Service. I was immediately taken out into the field to conduct Head Start and food safety surveys.

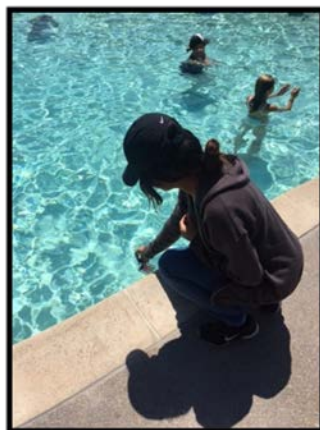
Our visit to the Karuk Tribe was my first experience with a Native American community. During my time as a COSTEP, I conducted field work on average of two times per week to local tribes and most field work was an all-day assignment. Most of the tribes were not only a distant drive but a very scenic and sometimes scary (think cliffs) drive. We visited the Hoopa Tribe often which was three hours away. I got to present the topics of foodborne illness, food temperatures, and safe food handling during a Food Handler Training and conduct Temporary Food Vendor inspections at Hoopa's Sovereign's Day event. The field work and hands-on experience allowed me to become proficient at writing FDA Food Code-based reports and using the 2013 FDA Food Code and NPFA Codes as well as some OSHA regulations.

During my time as a COSTEP I worked on many public health outreach projects. My first task was to create a Rocky Mountain spotted fever brochure on the risks of the disease and precautions that could be taken to protect communities. My next project was to create an IHS Zika Virus Health Bulletin informing the tribal communities about Zika virus, including transmission patterns, prevention, and its effects on pregnant women. I worked on an *Aedes* mosquito document outlining the environmental factors such as how to eliminate risk of mosquitos laying eggs near homes. To promote the importance of spaying and neutering pets and obtaining rabies vaccinations, I wrote a letter to the tribes introducing the opportunity of scheduling Rural Area Vaccination Services in their communities. The last project I worked on was data/statistical analysis on fatal and non-fatal injuries in California. These data were collected to help to form and prioritize injury prevention programs among the different tribes. This data was used to develop suicide prevention posters to be used at a Gun Safety Initiative event that will be held later this fall.



U.S. Army Veterinary Technicians preparing a dog for neutering

I was able to travel during my COSTEP experience to other offices in the California Area. My first trip was south near my home to the Escondido District Office to assist in rabies vaccination clinics. There I met CAPT Brian Lewelling, who had amazing stories about his career and valuable life tips. The rabies clinic was partnered with the U.S. Army and I got to learn a lot about animal health. I even got to watch a dog neutering up close and personal. My next trip was to the Ukiah Field Office where I was mentored by LT Tim Shelhamer. We conducted pre-operational Head Start surveys, kitchen surveys, and a food distribution center inspection. While on travel to the California Area Office in Sacramento I was mentored by LCDR Aaron McNeill. I was able to use my knowledge of the Model Aquatic Health Code while inspecting a pool. We also inspected an RV park and a childcare facility that was modeled after an arcade. My week living in downtown Sacramento was a very fun change in pace and good experience.



Testing pool pH and alkalinity

Overall, my experience as a COSTEP was a positive one. While being away from home can be exciting and challenging at times, I was fortuitous to be located at the Redding District Office. The Redding office staff was welcoming and supportive throughout my time here. My preceptor, LCDR Madson was a great mentor who went the extra mile to make my experience educational. I can't thank her enough for all the knowledge she has shared with me, patience and guidance she's extended, and in the midst of hard work the laughs shared for the summer. I have gained valuable public health experience that I will continue to use in my professional career. The relationships I was able to build with EH professionals will last a lifetime. I would strongly encourage other undergraduate and graduate students to apply to be a JRCOSTEP and experience this great opportunity.