

**ENS Amy Kuntz
JRCOSTEP Summer 2018
University of Washington
Billings Area Office
Billings, Montana**

My name is Amy Kuntz and I am going to be a senior at the University of Washington, Seattle, WA. I am currently pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Health with a minor in microbiology. This summer, I was given the opportunity to be a JRCOSTEP for the Indian Health Service in Billings, MT. One of the requirements for my degree is to complete a 10-week internship in an environmental health field. After hearing about the JRCOSTEP from another student in the department, I decided to apply. When I was initially researching the program, I liked the idea of hands on work in a wide variety of environmental health fields, ranging from water quality, food protection, and disease surveillance. I was excited to gain professional experience in an environment that utilized the previous knowledge from my studies while also fostering my learning as I worked with different Sanitarians on the reservations. I was also excited to see a different part of the country while working with local people and learning about their culture.



Sinks Canyon State Park, Lander, WY

After accepting the offer, I packed my car and drove 800+ miles to the Billings Area Office. Once I arrived, I met my preceptor, Darcy Merchant, and learned about the summer schedule he had planned. I was very excited since the work took me out of the office as I travelled to a majority of the reservations that the Billings Area Office serves.



Conducting a respirator fit test, Ft. Washakie, WY

Over the summer, I travelled to the Crow, Northern Cheyenne, Blackfeet, Wind River, Fort Belknap, and Fort Peck reservations as I learned about environmental health work from the local Sanitarian. During the first couple weeks in the office, I completed a food handler's and food protection manager course along with a certified pool inspector course to prepare me for some inspections I would conduct. One of the main activities I did this summer was inspect food vendors at powwows. I worked with the Sanitarian from the Service Unit to conduct these inspections; looking for proper temperatures and good hygiene practices. After gaining enough experience, I was able to conduct the surveys by myself. Throughout the summer, I worked seven different powwows and experienced the traditional cultures at each of the reservations. I enjoyed talking with the local people and meeting all the food vendors, who worked a lot of the same powwows I attended.

When I wasn't completing food inspections, I was helping perform institutional environmental health surveys at local clinics in the Service Units. I also helped conduct respirator fit tests at one of the IHS clinics on the Wind River Reservation. I also completed surveys of swimming pool and local facilities such as restaurants and senior citizen centers.

One of my favorite activities that I helped with was the rabies vaccination clinics. I worked with two different Service Units where I completed vaccination certifications and pet information. This information is important in case there was ever an animal bite incident to determine if it was vaccinated. After working with the Veterinarian, I learned how to fill syringes and also administer the rabies vaccination to cats and dogs of all sizes. I loved working with all the animals and working with the local people to educate them on the importance of the vaccinations.



Providing rabies vaccinations, Ft. Smith, MT

The wonderful experience this summer introduced me to the many fields of environmental health. I learned a lot about the culture of the different tribes while also working with experienced professionals. This experience was very unique in that I got hands-on experience while also traveling around the states of MT and WY. I would definitely recommend the JRCOSTEP to future students looking to apply for an externship.

