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Intern Summer 2018
Tulane University
Albuquerque Service Unit
Albuquerque, New Mexico

My name is Emily Cothorn and I am in the final year of my graduate degree at Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. I will finish with my Master of Science in Public Health in Industrial Hygiene. As a requirement of our program, graduate students must complete a practicum period gaining hands on experience in the field. I feel very lucky to have been selected to work for the Indian Health Service (IHS) at the Albuquerque Service Unit. I completed my internship in the Office of Environmental Health and Engineering, working with some of the most kind and encouraging professionals I have ever had the pleasure to meet.



Hiking to Ice Lake, Silverton, CO

Before this internship I was overwhelmingly unexposed to the Native American culture. I knew very little about the day to day operations, or the purpose of the Indian Health Service. The reason I am thankful for this internship is because I otherwise may have never experienced many of the things I grew to admire about this summer. All of my previous work experience has been in the private sector working in oil and gas and solid waste management. Making the change over to the government sector was very rewarding for me in many ways, the greatest of those being the job satisfaction and fulfillment I left work with every day after working with the tribes. When I worked for a large oil company the most important thing on everyone's mind was ensuring that the bottom line was never affected. Those of us working in the environmental and safety departments would be turned down for projects because public health and safety is not always a priority for CEO's running multi-billion-dollar enterprises. At IHS it was refreshing to feel the focus shift immediately to the community any time an issue needed to be addressed. This made me feel like I could accomplish more working for an agency that actually allows public health professionals to serve the public, not the financial machine.

Throughout the summer I was exposed to many different tasks, which increased my understanding of the nature of the job. Rather than my past experiences where nearly every day was a repeat of the day before, I was doing something new almost each day.



Conducting a table top X-Ray examination for a patient exposure assessment



Conducting ventilation testing using a hooded velometer



CAPT Brian Hroch using a TSI air velocity meter, Santa Fe, NM

I was able to travel often which is something I am passionate about. As someone new to the southwest, traveling to different locations for work provided me with an opportunity to see new scenery. During my externship I worked rabies clinics, assisted with ventilation and x-ray equipment testing at the hospital in Santa Fe, conducted food surveys of temporary vendors, lead presentations at numerous food handler's courses, and assisted with various administrative duties.

While I enjoyed the duties I was assigned, I also thoroughly enjoyed the company at my office. Each individual jumped at the opportunity to teach me something new or share their expertise with me. From this experience I believe I gained professional references that I can call upon in my future, and a support system of individuals to whom I can direct all of my questions. From this experience I now plan to apply to fill a permanent position with IHS upon my graduation. I felt a strong connection with the work we do and believe in the agency and what it stands to accomplish. The pictures below were taken on my first and last day working for IHS and they are special to me because they capture the relationships forged through this experience.



First day on the job spent in Pagosa Springs, CO, before the Jicarilla Apache rabies clinic



Farewell meal with the team, Albuquerque, NM