

ENS Jessica Stone
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Albuquerque Service Unit
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My name is Jessica Stone. I am an Environmental Health Science and Sustainability/Sociology dual degree at Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, KY. My duty station for the summer was in the Indian Health Service, Albuquerque Area, Division of Environmental Health Services, Albuquerque Service Unit (ASU) in Albuquerque, NM. My preceptors were LCDR Kathryn McNamara and LT Katherine Miller. During my time at ASU I got to serve the 19 Pueblos with many ASU, Santa Fe Service Unit, and Taos-Picuris Service Unit Environmental Health Officers. The tribes I served the most were probably Picuris, Jemez, Sandia, Taos, Laguna, and San Ildefonso. As an Environmental Health Officer, my program responsibilities included food safety, air quality, institutional environmental health, safety management, injury prevention, vector control, water and wastewater surveys, and general tasks such as projects, papers, and training.



My work at ASU has given me a lot of firsts that ride the line between work and cultural experiences. This includes my first feast day, first powwow, first uniformed services retirement ceremony, first casino, and so on. My first day at work was like a whirlwind of firsts; I think I met about 100 people for the first time, ate New Mexican food for the first time, attended my first Teams meeting (even though we had to huddle in the conference room and use LCDR McNamara's hot spot because the internet shut down). Then, there were the professional firsts. For example, my first assignment, where I rode with LT Miller to Picuris for a rabies vaccination clinic. This was my second day on the job and maybe it was scary at first, but now I just wish I could do it all over again. I also spent all this time learning about food inspections and institutional inspections in a classroom, and I finally got to do them. The professors must be doing a good job because it felt like I had been doing them for years.



Many of my work days felt like cultural days as well, including my first time out in the field on my own. I took a government vehicle to Jemez to help with their new bike injury prevention program. Ms. Toya, Area Injury Prevention Specialist, had asked for my assistance in delivering a presentation on brain injuries to convince the kids to wear their helmets at all times. This was my second time at the Jemez programming. The difference this time was that there was no one I knew from work, forcing me to get to know new people – a common theme throughout the whole experience. I enjoyed meeting the people in Jemez so much – helping the kids learn to ride bikes, making bracelets, and playing hang man when we had to wait to get extra lunches because there were only enough boxed lunches for the kids. I loved meeting people throughout all of the pueblos, everyone was incredibly kind. I also enjoyed the Puye Cliff Dwellings on one of my

days off. The guide was hilarious and told us all the interesting facts. The Indian Pueblo Cultural Center was amazing.

My true pride and joy of the externship was my main project; nitrous oxide (N_2O) testing at Albuquerque Indian Dental Clinic with CAPT (Retired) Keith Cook. When I first expressed interest in industrial hygiene, they told me I was in the perfect place due to LCDR McNamara's background and interest in IH. She took the time to ask other IH people in Albuquerque Area if they have any work they would be interested in conducting with me. Thus, the project was born. CAPT Box had a Viasensor G200 that could measure N_2O in the air and filter out CO_2 for more accurate testing. When not doing onboarding tasks, my first week or so was spent reading giant IHS research papers on N_2O testing and usage within the Indian Health Service. Our first trial told us there was a need for monitoring N_2O exposure among the dental workers, and most trials afterwards did as well. There is no possible way for the data collected in only one summer to be conclusive, but the experience has been unforgettable and fascinating. At this point, the dentists are invested in our results, so I do believe the study will continue.



Overall, I loved my COSTEP experience and everyone I met along the way. I keep telling friends and family that it was almost definitely the most significant thing I have done in my life so far. I know the people I met this summer will help to be guides as I enter my career after graduation. I will miss everyone until then.

My recommendations for future COSTEPs would be to make the absolute most of their experience by engaging in everything they can, both at work and outside of work. The journey ends much faster than it started, so it is important to throw away anxieties or fatigue and just do everything for a couple months. Furthermore, it is important to express specific interests to the preceptor as early as possible. They will work hard to tailor the experience towards special interests. I would also recommend finding housing as soon as possible.