

**ENS Debra Cravens
Jr COSTEP Summer 2008
Eastern Kentucky University
Billings Area Office
Billings, Montana**



The COSTEP experience is a unique opportunity that is rewarding and unforgettable. My name is Debra Cravens and I am from Lancaster, Kentucky where I attend Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond. I am currently a senior in the Environmental Health Science program. I first heard about COSTEP through my advisor, Joe Beck; who strongly suggested that I apply and I was lucky enough to be selected.

The COSTEP program offers students an exceptional experience into the realities of public health and gives them a chance to explore the world outside of their niche. The COSTEP experience gave me the opportunity to travel to new places and to learn new customs.

My COSTEP was at the Billings Area Indian Health Service, Injury Prevention program based out of Billings, Montana. I traveled through 5 states by car from Kentucky to Montana and I entered into an unknown territory in Montana which I had called home for the summer.

The majority of my summer COSTEP was spent designing injury prevention and safety PowerPoint presentations for playgrounds, ATVs, bicycle and skateboarding, sports injuries, and dog bites. I am also doing a work place violence PowerPoint presentation for Gary Carter's Environmental Health program.

The highlight of this summer internship with COSTEP was when I spent a week in Missoula, MT for the Montana-Wyoming Native Youth Academy. Native American youth ages 11-14 from all Reservations in Montana and Wyoming participated in the event. I was a clan leader for a group of 12 young ladies. During this week we learned how to eat healthier, exercise and working has a team. The girls developed a public service announcement about an important problem they see on their Reservation. The topic they chose was drug and alcohol abuse and they wrote and starred in the video. At the end of the week we watched a movie entitled, "Running Brave," which is the story about an Oglala-Sioux from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation named Billy Mills who won the Olympic Gold in the 10,000 meter race in Tokyo, Japan back in 1964. When the movie was over Mr. Mills came out to meet the kids. The next day Mr. Mills gave a motivational speech about his life and that the kids can be anything they want, but you have to want it.

In addition, I got to travel to the Fort Peck Reservation for an injury prevention coalition meeting with the tribe, IHS, State Police, and local law enforcement. They currently want

to pass a primary seat belt law for the reservation. I also traveled to the Crow Reservation on several occasions to conduct medical chart reviews for injury surveillance. I researched medical charts to look for anything relating to unintentional and intentional injuries such as motor vehicle crashes and falls.

My experience with American Indians and the staff at Indian Health Service was personally and professionally rewarding. The COSTEP experience gave me the chance to expand my horizons and to travel to places I might not ever get to see. I will continue to recommend the opportunity to others who are interested in going above and beyond and gaining an extraordinary, overwhelming, and fulfilling experience. My accomplishments during my COSTEP will help me to become a well-rounded future professional and the skills I learned in Billings IHS will follow me in my career path ahead. The only draw back was I had to leave my husband and two kids back in Kentucky, but we talked everyday. To me this was the opportunity of a lifetime.