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JrCOSTEP Summer 2008
Salisbury University
Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
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My JrCOSTEP brought me to Anchorage, Alaska. I worked with the Indian Health Service and the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium under the direction of Lieutenant Commander Troy Ritter. My main activities involved working with water and sanitation in remote Alaska Native communities. I also worked on various other projects involving a wide range of environmental health issues.



I experienced many different areas of environmental health including food safety and sanitation, water quality, environmental health research, and clinic safety. Beyond that I developed my writing skills as well as the ability to work with a different culture and learn about their environmental health concerns.

The water quality project opened my eyes to a problem that many believe is already solved. Running water in homes is not something that is guaranteed even in this modern age. Many villages in rural Alaska still do not have in-home water service. I worked to educate people about proper water use and promoted sanitary practices in hopes of increasing health and overall quality of life.

I traveled to five different villages, doing something different in each. I documented rain catchment use, spoke with residents about water use as it pertains to health concerns, and conducted environmental health surveys.

When in the villages, it is not only the work that makes it a great learning experience. I had the opportunity to speak with residents one on one, hear their stories, and learn about subsistence living. Subsistence is a unique way of life and learning about it from those who have practiced it their whole life was remarkable.



The people I met and worked with made this experience memorable. All the EHOs that I worked with had different specialties and were more than willing to share their experiences with me. They were very involved with their work. These officers love what they do and it was very clear that they are making a difference.

I experienced first hand the type of work an EHO can do and this has led me to a great interest in

exploring the United States Public Health Service as a career.

The work being done in Alaska is very important to the health of so many. I am blessed that I had my hand in a project that will bring improved water and living standards to rural Alaskans. The skills that I learned this summer will help in guiding my career as I have been introduced to different areas of environmental health. This summer was an experience that I would not change and would recommend to anyone with an interest in environmental health. An Alaska COSTEP experience can provide a view of the many areas of environmental health available to graduates while allowing them to experience a different culture and way of life.