

**ENS Natasha Wells  
Jr. COSTEP 2008  
Colorado State University  
Santa Fe District Office-  
Santa Fe, New Mexico**

I am majoring in Environmental Health at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado and am a member of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in Fort Yates, North Dakota. I am also an Indian Health Service Scholarship recipient, and I will be graduating in December 2008. I plan on working with the Indian Health Service after I graduate. I look forward to working in the environmental health field and improving the health of American Indians &



Alaska Natives. I was very excited to get offered the opportunity to work in the Santa Fe District Office, not only because of the beautiful scenery and the great weather, but to experience a different Native American culture than the one I grew up with in South Dakota. I experienced the pueblo culture first hand working with community members throughout my COSTEP experience. During my COSTEP, I was exposed to many areas of public health and had the opportunity to learn a lot of hands-on experience too. My first day, I met Santa Fe District Environmental Health staff and the Albuquerque Area's COSTEP Elizabeth Cookson and we traveled to the Jicarilla Apache Nation in Dulce, NM to conduct a rabies clinic. This



rabies clinic was the largest in the Albuquerque Area. The town of Dulce, NM is located just south of the Colorado border and it is surrounded by mountains and gorgeous forests. Throughout the summer I participated in several rabies clinics in the northern district of New Mexico. The Santa Fe district office provides services to the pueblos: Cochiti, Nambe, Pojoaque, San Felipe, San Ildefonso, Santa Clara, Santa Domingo, Taos, Picuris, Ohkay Owingeh (San Juan Pueblo), Tesuque, Ute Mountain Ute tribe, Southern Ute tribe, and the Jicarilla Apache Nation.

The beginning of my internship I worked with Katie Noonan and Anthony Candelaria, to conduct surveys of tribal restaurants, senior center kitchens, convenience stores, and travel centers. I also conducted several food vendor surveys at the local feasts, celebrations, and at a local tribal restaurant. After my food inspection survey I wrote a summary report using the WEBEHRS reporting system and made recommendations for improvements based on the FDA Food Code. I assisted in an epidemiological investigation of food-borne illnesses at a local restaurant and a home environmental mold assessment in a pueblo community. I also assisted the DEHS staff and engineers in conducting sanitary surveys of community water systems, and solid waste disposal systems. I also prepared a food handler's training presentation for tribal members in the Northern District.



The majority of my internship was spent on major projects such as developing asthma assessment tools and researching environmental health indicators for the prevalence of asthma. The research expanded from other government agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the New Mexico Department of Health Environmental Health Epidemiology Bureau. I developed indoor & outdoor assessment tools to track and reduce the causes of environmental health triggers for asthma for pueblo communities. I developed an educational power point presentation and brochure about the prevalence of asthma in New Mexico. I also worked on a database which included community specific information such as community liaison contact information, fax numbers, addresses, and email addresses, titled the Community Alert Network (CAN). The CAN will assist in the dissemination of information and communication with community partners.

I would strongly encourage anyone who is in need of an internship to apply for a COSTEP. You get to experience a broad spectrum of environmental health issues and experience something new everyday. The experience challenges you personally and professionally and gives you a chance to develop your problem solving skills. I would like to extend thanks to all the staff at the Santa Fe District Office for providing the best advice, insight, and experience I could have.