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Jr. COSTEP Summer 2009
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Anchorage, Alaska

I am currently enrolled in the Master of Science in Environmental Health program at ETSU. I heard about the Jr. COSTEP program from several of our undergraduate students and thought it was interesting. The following year two Commissioned Officers based at the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, and former graduates of ETSU, gave a presentation about the United States Public Health Service (USPHS). After their presentation I was sold on the Jr. COSTEP experience. As a graduate student, I am not required to complete an internship but decided to do the COSTEP program to expand my career knowledge.

I began the application process in October 2008 and received the first phone call about a program opportunity in Alaska. Near the beginning of February 2009, I got final confirmation that I was accepted as one of the six blessed few who would spend their summer in Alaska.

My assignment with the Indian Health Service was in Anchorage working for the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC). ANTHC is a statewide non-profit health organization created in 1997 by Alaskan Natives. I worked at ANTHC's Division of Environmental Health and Engineering (DEHE) under the direction of LTJG Jennifer Dobson.

The Department of Environmental Health Support at ANTHC is comprised of three programs: Field Environmental Health (FEH), special projects and institutional/occupational safety. I was fortunate to be able to assist all programs within the department.

FEH is responsible for 38 villages scattered throughout the Aleutian Islands, Kodiak Island and south central Alaska. FEH travels to outlying areas to assist with a variety of services such as health education, technical support and surveys. I was able to travel to several villages along the road system to assess village clinics and practice philosophies founded by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Life Safety Code.

Prior to my internship I had no experience with industrial hygiene or occupational health. I was able to assist with surveying medical X-ray equipment at the Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC) and had the opportunity to learn more about hazards within the workplace. Additionally, I conducted a fire extinguisher permit course to train and certify staff members.

Through the special projects division, I was able to work on a variety of environmental health issues ranging from water fluoridation in Alaska communities to water use promotion and education activities in villages about to receive piped water for the first time.





While in Alaska I was able to vacation in the unadulterated wilderness of the last frontier. I was able to gain a new level of appreciation for nature's beauty at the sight of a naturally winding river and the peak of Mt. McKinley. The people, both Native and non-Native, of Alaska were warm and welcoming. This made my stay very enjoyable and strengthened my desire to one day return.

The experiences and exposures I obtained while on assignment in Alaska have influenced me profoundly. I have gained confidence in my abilities and value as an environmental and public

health practitioner. Because of my wonderful COSTEP experience a career with USPHS will be a strong consideration for my post graduation path. I highly encourage anyone considering an education or career in the field of environmental and public health to pursue the JRCOSTEP program.