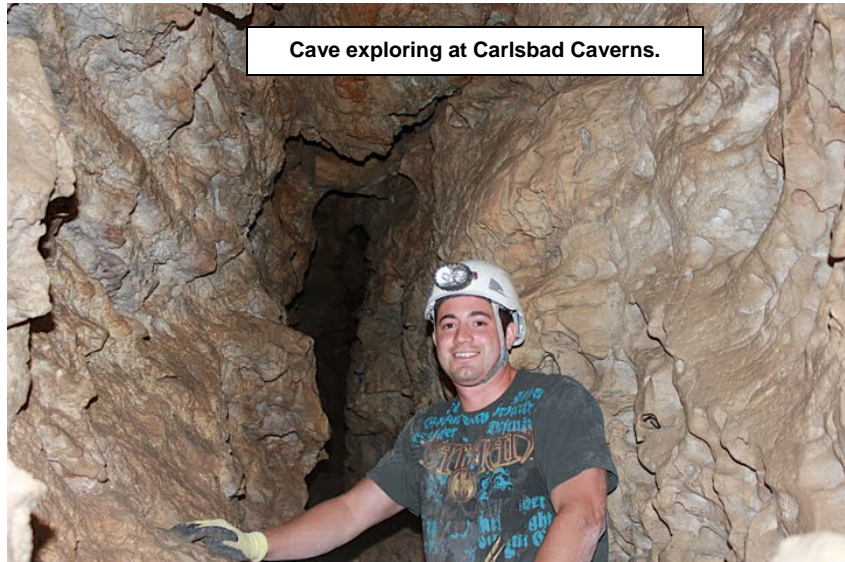


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Jr. COSTEP 2009
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My United States Public Health Service (USPHS) COSTEP was with the Santa Fe Indian Health Service (IHS) as an Environmental Health Officer under the supervision of Commander Jeff Dickson. I am currently starting my second year of Graduate School at San Diego State University in which I am studying to earn a degree in Master of Public Health (MPH) concentrating in Environmental Health.

This was my first experience working with IHS and it was both challenging and fun. Tasks included vaccinating dogs and cats at rabies clinics and conducting food surveys at various facilities which were composed of food vendors and food franchises on several pueblo lands. I also taught food handler classes, participated in a sanitary water and sewer

system survey, and worked on a project that focused on developing an educational health program for pueblo communities regarding asthma prevention, dust mitigation, air monitoring practices, and long-term community modifications.



On my second day of duty, I was able to experience the adventures of a rabies clinic located at the Jicarilla Apache Nation in Dulce, NM. At the clinic, several Environmental Health Officers and I vaccinated about 500 cats and dogs. I also was able to experience some Native American culture when I watched a traditional dance ceremony. During my time in New Mexico I was able to try many traditional delicacies

such as Navajo burgers, mutton stew, red/green chile dishes, and fry bread while visiting different Native American communities. I am glad I did not gain 20 pounds because it easily could've happened.

Food surveys were conducted regularly during feasts and celebrations at various pueblos. The largest event we attended was held at the Jicarilla Apache Nation in Dulce, NM where there were over 30 food vendors. During the surveys recommendations were given on site to correct various issues involving mishandling of food, improper holding temperatures for hot/cold foods, improper cooking procedures, hand washing stations, and sanitation stations, to name a few. This process was educational because it helped me develop an understanding of how to communicate more effectively by listening to community member needs and then wait to respond with recommendations. Food surveys were also conducted at food franchises located on pueblo lands and those surveys were filed into the Web Based Environmental Health Reporting System (WEBEHRS) software and recommendations were based upon the FDA Food Code.

I performed food handler's training classes at the Santa Fe Indian Hospital and at the Jicarilla Apache Nation. These classes involved a thorough training on food handling skills that lasted about 1.5 hours, followed by a quiz. I trained class sizes of 19 and 29. Class participation was encouraged, allowing for a relaxed and fun atmosphere.

An environmental health sanitary water and sewer survey dealing with a public ground water supply system and a community sewer system was performed with the assistance of a tribal system operator at the Santa Clara Pueblo. I participated in the survey report with Katie Hubbard, an Environmental Health Officer, and Brad Sherer, an Environmental Engineer. During the survey, I learned how pueblos are regulated by EPA.

Finally, I was assigned to write an informative paper about the relationship between asthma, dust mitigation, and air monitoring practices and supply appropriate recommendations for each. The rate of asthma in pueblo communities tends to be very high due to the abundance of dirt roads, which are considered sacred lands and therefore are not paved. This project focused on suppressing the particulate matter that is released from the dirt roads in pueblo communities. The report that I composed provided options on what mitigation techniques may be used to suppress the particulate matter. Pueblos were also given information on air monitoring possibilities that are available through EPA funding. This project was enjoyable because it involved a lot of research and communication with people from different avenues such as the EPA, Air Quality Districts, and vendors.

My experiences as a COSTEP were great and I highly recommend participating in the COSTEP program. An IHS COSTEP provides valuable experiences dealing with environmental health issues and will expose you to Native American culture. I will definitely consider IHS for my future professional possibilities.