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Jr COSTEP Summer 2011
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As an environmental health student at Colorado State University, I was required to get an internship in the environmental health field. I had learned about the US Public Health Service and the Indian Health Service through my advisor, Erin Reichert. The COSTEP program sounded like it would be an excellent opportunity to use the skills that I had learned in my classes and to gain experience in the field. Once I found out that there was an office in Santa Fe, an hour away from where I live, I decided to apply for the COSTEP program as a way to work with the communities that I had been living nearby to since I was a kid. I applied for the COSTEP program and was able to get a position at the Santa Fe Service Unit, which serves eight pueblos: San Felipe, Santo Domingo, Cochiti, Tesuque, Pojoaque, San Ildefonso, Nambe, and Santa Clara. The Albuquerque Area as a whole covers 23 different tribes.



Once I was actually able to start working at the office, I got to go out in the field almost immediately because there was an all day rabies clinic on my second day there. The rabies clinics I was able to go to were definitely a fun experience, there's nothing quite like a pickup truck full of cats or a van full of small dogs to test your memory by trying to keep track of which ones have been vaccinated. The rabies clinics were a very small portion of my summer, much more of my field work involved food establishment inspections. In fact, I did so many food vendor inspections at the feast days and at the Little Beaver Celebration in Dulce that I essentially have the inspection sheet memorized. I also had the opportunity to experience many different aspects of the work that goes on at the Santa Fe office, from attending meetings on a project still in the development stages to inspecting the wastewater treatment plant in

Pojoaque and the newly completed Head Start building at Santo Domingo (the playground equipment was thoroughly tested to ensure its safety). It was a very busy summer trying to fit in as many experiences as possible in the two short months that I had there.

Work in the office was almost as varied as the field work. I wrote reports for the inspections that I performed and worked on several different projects over the summer. The projects ranged from developing community presentations on topics such as hantavirus to working on the new Breathe Safe program being developed for the Head Start children. Having my own projects and having the freedom to develop them as I envisioned gave me great experience for any projects that I work on in future careers.

This summer has been a great experience; I was able to get lots of exposure to many different areas of environmental health and work with communities that I probably would never have been able to experience otherwise.

