

ENS Talina Wood
Jr. COSTEP Summer 2012
East Central University
Division of Environmental Health
Gallup, New Mexico

My name is Talina Wood. I am currently working towards a Bachelors of Science in Environmental Health at East Central University in Ada, Oklahoma. I will complete my degree requirements in May of 2013. Although, I did not know what to expect once I arrived at the Gallup Office of Environmental Health (OEH). I did not know that I would be in for a great experience that few people get to participate in. With the guidance of a wonderful and knowledgeable supervisor and other staff members, I will leave the OEH with a sense of pride and accomplishment. My supervisor was Captain Wayne Hall; District Environmental Health Officer. CAPT Hall oversees the Gallup and Crownpoint Service Units. Both service units combined are responsible for providing services to thirty-two communities. CAPT Hall



stated “that your time here at the OEH will be an experience that you will never forget and it will fly by.” I had the opportunity to work with both service units and the staff. Gallup OEH: Delores Loretto; Service Unit Sanitarian, LTJG Tim DenHerder Environmental Health Officer, Nellie Benally, and Doris Lynch; Environmental Health Specialist, Gerilyn Sheppard; Office Administrator, Theresa Yazzie; District Injury Prevention Specialist, and Geraldine Ashley; Tribal Sanitarian. Crownpoint OEH: Leonard Freeland; Environmental Health Technician, Walter Besola; Environmental Health Specialist, and CDR James Howell; Environmental Health Officer. It was a great learning experience which gave me a different perspective on how each staff member performed their duties.

My call of duty was set for June 4, 2012. Upon my arrival I was informed that I would participate in conducting annual inspections, trainings and surveys at institutional facilities: stand alone senior citizen centers, detention centers, rehabilitation centers, cafeterias, chapter houses, BIA community water/waste systems, follow-up surveys (as needed), rabies clinics, food handler’s training, occupational health surveys, and injury prevention.

The OEH conducts rabies clinics at the beginning of June each year at all of the thirty-two communities, so that the residents can bring their canine/feline pets for free shots. Owners receive documentation and rabies tags for their pets, as proof of the vaccination. In thirty-two communities we were able to vaccinate two thousand seven hundred seventy-five canines/felines. The OEH vaccinates the canines/felines in order to help prevent the rabies virus which is endemic to the area from infecting pets and human beings that may come in contact with other infected animals. In addition, I was also able to help conduct several food handler’s trainings with Delores Loretto, LTJG DenHerder, and Geraldine Ashley. I also worked with LCDR Woodlee (Deputy Director of Division of Occupational Health and Safety Management), conducting occupational health surveys at the Gallup Indian Medical Center. I had the fortune to participate in various injury prevention activities and I was certified





under “Safe Kids Worldwide” as a **National Child Passenger Safety Technician (NCPS)**. I helped conduct seatbelt/car seat surveys, participated in injury prevention projects, and a health fair.

During my 2012 JRCOSTEP, my knowledge of the Public Health Service (PHS) has sparked my interest in joining the PHS and is a career path I intend to pursue. I have gained a great amount of hands on experience which I feel has prepared me for the future as a commission officer in the PHS. My opinion to anyone who is seeking a degree or internship in Environmental Health is to consider the PHS and become a JRCOSTEP. Overall, I learned life lessons that I will never forget. I could not ask for a better group of individuals to work and internship with!