



The Great Lakes EpiCenter News

Epidemiology Project of the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, Inc.

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Epidemiology is the study of the distribution and determinants of health-related states or events in specified populations and the application of this study to the control of health problems.

The EpiCenter provides epidemiological services to the Tribes in the Bemidji Area (Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota). The services include training and technical assistance in many areas of public health, data management, program planning, and program evaluation.

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NARCH Intern Studies Bears

Submitted by Stacy Nye



When I began my journey as a student at the University of Wisconsin in Green Bay, I knew I wanted to study in the field of medicine, particularly in veterinary medicine. Many people believe a career in veterinary medicine is merely a job just caring for animals. However, this career has opportunities many never think of, including research on animals for the good of public health. Throughout college, my desire, experience, and knowledge of the field grew to completely new levels. I credit much of this education with mentors and the NARCH program I became involved in during this past year.

While in my junior year, I became aware of the NARCH program through a friend working with the Inter-Tribal Council in Lac du Flambeau, but never thought any-

one would consider my interest in veterinary medicine to be part of this program. The past two years I have been part of a study involving the North American Black Bear of the Nicolet National Forest in conjunction with UW-Green Bay, the United States Forest Service, and Dr. Chris Katz, a veterinarian located in Two Rivers, Wisconsin. The purpose of studying these bears is to educate others about their real habits, the intricacies of human-bear interactions, and other various goals. Bears are a great medium to study since they are easy to find, via radio collars, and are a source of what is in the environment.

During the summer months, our research crew gathers data on bears captured in culvert traps and are then collared with radio collars. Our main goal is to collect

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as much data as possible in the amount of time the anesthetics allow us, minimizing the amount of stress put on the animal while still giving utmost respect. Blood, feces, parasites, weight, and measurements are just a few of the tasks performed on each bear, in addition to tagging them and providing collars to those we see fit.

As winter nears, dens of these bears are found. Essentially the same processes are completed. By studying each piece provided to us by the bear, we can evaluate the health of the bear, not to mention the health of the environment. Blood samples are sent to testing facilities around the country and are tested for seventeen diseases plus levels of lead, mercury, and arsenic. By discovering important information as this, we can inform the communities and public of the state of the environment around us.

The NARCH program furthered my experience and knowledge by providing me with the opportunity to work with Dr. Katz throughout the summer of 2005. I completed various duties at the veterinary office in Two Rivers while taking in every opportunity to view the work completed in this field. My duties included fecal parasite analysis, complete blood counts, organizing data, and data entry into computer spreadsheets. But my main focus was still involved in the research of the bears. Throughout these processes, I learned vast amounts of knowledge relative to veterinary care and services, but more importantly how detailed oriented and precise one must be to conduct accurate research.

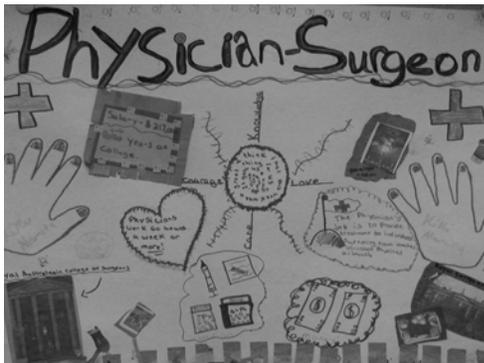
Currently, I am still working with NARCH as a

part-time student. Most of my free time (as little as that may be) has been devoted to the program and the bear study. In October I began my very own research project on the survivorship of orphaned black bear cubs. Five cubs, without mothers found at various locations around the state, were brought to a facility in Minocqua, Wisconsin and rehabilitated. When October neared, our crew processed each cub and provided each one with a radio tracking collar. They were all released into the Nicolet National Forest and have been continually tracked and studied. During February, each cub will be reprocessed to evaluate his or her health.

The NARCH program has been supportive and helpful in my pursuit of a career in veterinary medicine. My development coordinators have always been extremely flexible with my schedules and very supportive of my work that I so proudly complete. My goals of educating other community members and tribal members of the work I accomplish have been greatly advanced by the NARCH program. Without this program, I do not believe I could connect as deeply as I do with other members of the public and would not be able to educate others as well as I am. My communication, organizational, public speaking, and research skills are an example of some traits which I have improved by working with the program. NARCH has enabled me to continue working toward my dream of veterinary medicine, and has pushed me to new limits and new goals for myself. I recommend the NARCH program to anyone who is remotely interested in the health care field. The opportunities provided through this program are limitless.

NARCH Middle School Update

Submitted by Kathleen Skoraczewski



The middle school career exploration program is in full swing. This year the program is focusing on educating sixth graders about the variety of career options in the field of health care. Students had the opportunity to explore their own interests and learn how they relate potential careers. Through group and individual work, the sixth grade students have taught each other about different categories of health careers, as well as specific jobs of interest. They are learning the magnitude of making good choices early in school and have voiced a real understanding of the importance of graduating from high school.

New Staff

OFF TO A GOOD START...

This edition of the *Great Lakes EpiCenter News* provides a great opportunity to communicate a greeting to all of you, introduce myself and share a few goals that I have in mind as a result of my first week in the program. Prior work as a consultant over the last several years with several Great Lakes Inter Tribal Council programs including the EpiCenter, has contributed to my initial impressions of the staff and their work toward the improved health of American Indian people. My experience here since the turn of the new year affirms my decision to join the well qualified, dedicated and talented EpiCenter staff. I hope to contribute to an open, creative and participatory environment, build on program support and resources while emphasizing the continuous need to facilitate meaningful, productive relationships between tribal leaders, tribal citizens, health providers, government officials, agency representatives and EpiCenter staff.

My 30+ years of experience in health care, education, community development and program management has taught me to listen earnestly, seek understanding, be inclusive and believe in the capacity of people to creatively solve problems. With this in mind, I would like to work toward a few initial goals:

- Learn the historical and current landscape of complex tribal, government, agency, scientific, funding and programmatic relationships
- Establish a presence in EpiCenter operations, initiatives, partnerships, collaboratives on the local, state and national levels
- Explore the science and practice of relevant data collection, analysis, interpretation and program application to ongoing and emerging tribal health issues
- Engage partners in discussions about program quality and improvement
- Promote prevention activities and early intervention strategies in program outreach and research dissemination
- Build on the EpiCenter capacity to develop and implement progressive outcome evaluation practices

In the early months of 2006, I hope to reach Tribal Health Directors, Tribal Council leaders and key officials by phone or face to face visits. Please call at anytime to share history, information, ideas and suggestions. I look forward to working with you toward healthy and prosperous Indian communities.

Kristin Hill, EpiCenter Director



Hello! I am **Nancy Peterman**, a resident of Arbor Vitae, WI. I have 2 children, Corina (16) and Colin (11) and have recently married Rodney in April. We relocated to Northern Wisconsin seven years ago from the Chicago area. A move that was facilitated by my parents choice to retire here...I followed. They have since left the area for warmer climates to return only in the summer. I earned my BS in Information Technology from the University of Phoenix (on-line campus) in 2004. Prior to joining the team at GLITC, I was employed at Marshfield Clinic in the Patient Assistance/Accounting Department.

In our spare time we enjoy boating, biking (of the Harley variety), fishing & hunting. We added a new member to our family last year that keeps us all on our toes, a Golden Retriever puppy. Even at 18 months old, he has a lot of pup left in him.

Thank you to everyone that has made me feel so welcome. I look forward to combining my education and experience in my new position.

Great Lakes EpiCenter Mission: To support Tribal communities in their efforts to improve health by assisting with data needs through: Partnership Development, Community Based Research, Education, and Technical Assistance.

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