



Intern: Abbie Zellner
Placement: Sauk County Health Department
AHEC Region: South Central

As an intern at the Sauk County Health Department, Abbie learned about specific challenges facing rural communities. She organized public listening sessions, created online health surveys, collected and analyzed data and attended meetings, some with local legislators.

“I am surprised by how much behind-the-scenes work public health employees do. Much of the work we do goes unnoticed by the general population because a lot of what we do is prevention work,” Abbie said. “I also was surprised by the number of connections and partnerships the health department has. I worked closely with my mentor Cindy Bodendein throughout my internship, and it’s really refreshing to see people working together toward one common goal. Cindy also worked hard to provide me with opportunities to learn even more!”

Abbie is currently studying neurobiology and human development and family studies with an emphasis in leadership at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She intends to go on to medical school.

“CHIP inspired me to also pursue a master's in public health, so I am specifically applying to dual MD and MPH programs.”

Abbie also said CHIP left her with many transferable skills she acquired from working with diverse groups of people. She hopes to incorporate these skills into her future academic and professional career.

“I’ve learned a lot about how much we rely on public health. Is the water the waitress safe to drink? What about the water at my campsite? Will there be salmonella on the salad I just ordered? These are the things we work on every single day,” Abbie said. “At the health department, we worry about these things so that the rest of the community doesn’t have to.”



Intern: Amanda Ross
Placement: Juneau County Health Department
AHEC Region: Scenic Rivers

Amanda, a recent graduate from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, spent her summer diving into public health at the Juneau County Health Department, located near her hometown of Wilton, Wis.

“I am originally from a rural area in southwestern Wisconsin, so it was nice to intern in my hometown area because I was personally aware of the struggles community members faced. I grew up on a dairy farm outside of Wilton, which stemmed my love for the outdoors, physical activity, and health and wellness. At UW-Stevens Point, I continued pursuing these passions by studying health science and psychology. The CHIP program was a natural next step.

Returning to my hometown as an intern was eye opening because I got help improve health and wellness through various interventions that I didn't even know existed. It was nice to have the ability to give back to my community in some way."

As an intern, Amanda led informative events about the local WIC clinic, and Car Seat check and Tobacco Compliance Check initiatives. Amanda said the projects the department was working on also helped her decide where to intern.

"What attracted me to the site was the option of creating a Health and Safety Resource Guide," Amanda said. "It sounded like a project with a lot of community involvement and outreach, which fit my outgoing personality perfectly."

Amanda acquired many skills throughout her internship, such as organizing and implementing community events, communication, creativity, taking initiative and working closely with a supervisor.

"I was extremely lucky to have MacKensie Pampuch as my mentor. She was personable, flexible, and very knowledgeable about the field. The staff at the Juneau County Health Department was just as enjoyable to work with as MacKensie."

After CHIP, Amanda accepted a Farm to School AmeriCorps Service position at the Winnebago County Health Department, where she continues her public health career.

"With public health, community involvement and strong communication is essential. It's important to maintain strong, positive relationships with stakeholders, and remember the goals at task. These goals are important so the group and coalition does not become stagnant. It's also equally important to reflect on past goals, and recognize the successes and learn from the failures."



Intern: Monica Bianchini
Placement: Polk County Health Department/ County Jail
AHEC Region: Northwest

Monica, a student in the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Medicine and Public Health, interned at the Polk County Health Department and County Jail. Her primary project focused on increasing access to healthcare in the justice system by enrolling inmates in BadgerCare health insurance and setting up a small system of pre-release planning services. Her goal was to provide inmates with tools and resources to improve their quality of life and decrease the rate of recidivism.

"I feel individualization of care is important in these settings because every individual you interact with is a very complex case," Monica said. "My ability to communicate and connect with patients has definitely improved from interacting with such a unique population."

While a lack of resources challenged her, Monica persevered, learning from her mentor Donna Johnson, PHN, and those who worked around her.

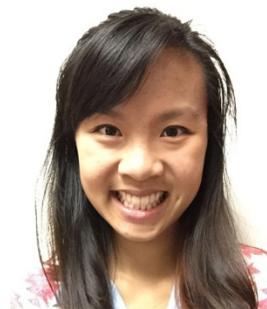
“This was my first time being a mentor,” Donna said. “What a great experience it was. My intern was beyond outstanding and what Monica was able to develop and implement here at the Polk County Jail will serve the citizens of Polk County LONG after she has moved on to greater things!”

“I had one of the most amazing mentors, a public health jail nurse who was just as passionate about public health as I am,” Moncia responded. “She was constantly trying to expand my experience through inviting me to meetings with other public health players such as law enforcement, psychiatrists, pharmaceutical representatives, crisis counselors, social workers and public defenders.”

Monica was constantly inspired and motivated by the inmates’ enthusiasm for enrolling in BadgerCare. She also enjoyed immersing herself into public health in a rural setting.

“I am originally from Indianapolis, Indiana, but I’ve been living in Madison for the past five years. Working in Polk County was one of my first true immersions into a rural community, and it definitely gave me great insight to public health work at the base level. Inmates’ experiences in the healthcare system with and without health insurance showed me time and time again why every person should have access to affordable health care and why public health workers should be working to make this possible,” Monica said

Monica is currently pursuing her fourth and final year of graduate school in which she will be on an 8-week clinical rotation in different pharmacy and public health settings in Wisconsin. Afterward, she plans to pursue a pharmacy residency specializing in infectious disease, looking forward to a career in global health.



Intern: Samantha Wong
Placement: Marshfield Clinic: Marshfield Dental Center
AHEC Region: North Central

Samantha, a student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison pursuing degrees in biology and a pre-dental track, spent summer 2015 interning at Marshfield Clinic: Marshfield Dental Center. Her main focus was working on an oral health literacy pilot study at the clinic. Samantha also created and gave presentations on health innovation topics for the research foundation, informing them about the progressive integration of health care and technology in our world today.

“This internship provided several opportunities to develop skills that will be helpful in my future,” Samantha said. “Since I want to become a pediatric dentist, I have tremendously benefitted from the job shadowing experiences I’ve had. It gave me the ability to not only observe the practice I am truly passionate about, but it allowed me to witness the community’s health status and how the clinic responds to barriers in order to provide available oral health care.”

Originally from the Chicago area, Samantha learned immensely from her rural placement. She was surprised to hear some of the reasons patients gave as to why their teeth or overall health was in poor condition.

“Growing up in a well-developed area, I learned early on that oral health and going to the dentist and doctor is very important for being healthy. Therefore, going to Marshfield and learning about how some people don’t care about their health was a little bit of culture shock to me. But it provided me a new perspective on the community and allowed me to experience things I probably wouldn’t have if I had not gotten this internship. Seeing those patients and listening to their stories, as well as learning how detrimental low oral health literacy can be, motivated me to want to help the community and make sure that people were able to access healthcare to improve their overall health.”

Samantha also enjoyed working with her mentor, who she said offered invaluable lessons.

“Being able to work with a mentor was one of the highlights of the internship because not only did he play on my current strengths, but he also taught me something new every day, strengthened my weaknesses and valued my opinion on some of his research. In addition, he also stated that mentorship with him does not stop after the internship, which is a great feeling to have since he taught me so much in so little time.”

After CHIP, Samantha plans on pursuing dental school and specializing in pediatric dentistry.

“Being able to job shadow at the Marshfield Clinic: Marshfield Dental Center influenced me on where I plan on working in the future. With so much variety in the patients and cases the dentists and hygienists see each day (due to the rural-ness of the area), I would love to work in that kind of atmosphere.”