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Public Health Region 1 (Northwest Texas) Increase Interest in Health Inspection Careers through University Outreach and Internships

Relationships between the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) and universities bring awareness to various career paths and internship opportunities in public health. In the Spring of 2024, Public Health Region (PHR) 1 Retail Food Safety team presented to a class in the Department of Food and Animal Science at Texas Tech University (TTU). The team regularly talks with TTU Food Science students to share knowledge and educate them about their work as Registered Sanitarians (also known as Health Inspectors).

The presentation especially resonated with TTU student Makaela Graham. Makaela previously worked multiple restaurant-related jobs, and learning more about the Registered Sanitarian career path at DSHS encouraged her to intern with PHR 1 this summer. "Their presentation was so informative, I had to ask about the internship immediately. I have had multiple restaurant related jobs and interning with DSHS has been the most positive professional interaction I have had," she said. "Everyone at DSHS I have interacted with has been very helpful and polite. Maintaining relationships like this is key to getting new students informed and excited about work opportunities with DSHS."

Her internship experience focused on food safety, with one of the most notable problems being temperature-controlled meat regulations. The improper storage, thawing, or cooling of food allows for the rapid growth of bacteria that could make someone sick, especially in warm kitchen temperatures. "It's like detective work, but food related," she said. "Each restaurant is a unique experience with different challenges."

Registered Sanitarians are vital to preventing foodborne and communicable disease outbreaks. While many connect Registered Sanitarians with restaurant and food warehouse inspections, they are also responsible for inspecting and regulating other facets of environmental



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health including water quality, air quality, occupational health, and consumer health.

Makaela noted about her internship, “Inspecting restaurants feels like going on a scavenger hunt for things that could endanger the public. I enjoy the satisfaction of knowing that we’re helping to keep these restaurants and customers safe by inspecting them.” She hopes to have a career as a Registered Sanitarian after she graduates.

Job opportunities exist at both DSHS and Local Health Departments for similar roles. Look for key words such Sanitarian, Environmental Protection, and Health Inspection. [Visit the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation for more information about becoming a Registered Sanitarian here.](#)