

RUTGERSNew Jersey Agricultural
Experiment Station

Emily Carey: Public Health Coordinator, the Office of Continuing Professional Education

Carey grew up knowing she wanted to make the world “a better place.”

Carey knew from experience how integral the EPH course is to obtaining the NJ REHS license.

Growing Up with Public Health

As a youngster, Emily Carey loved to listen to her mom, a Registered Environmental Health Specialist (REHS) in the Somerset County area, tell “exciting stories” about her profession. “It was great stuff as a kid, and I saw how you could really make a difference with Public Health,” she says, recalling her introduction to the world of environmental and public health at a young age. Carey has always been interested in the environment and “making the world a better place,” so for her, it was a logical move to major in environmental policy and minor in public health as an undergraduate at Rutgers University. As she was beginning college, Carey’s mother was beginning a new experience, too: she moved from being an REHS to a public health officer. The new job was more policy-based, fitting perfectly with Carey’s interest in environmental policy, and Carey knew right away that she, too, wanted to become a health officer.



Since completing the EPH course, Carey has worked on bioterrorism preparedness projects with OCPE.

During the summer of 2008, only weeks after she graduated from Rutgers, Carey took the EPH course offered through the NJAES Office of Continuing Professional Education (OCPE). The EPH course involves seven weeks of full-time classroom learning and a 200-hour internship with a local health department. By successfully completing the course and the internship, students receive the intensive public health, food safety, and epidemiology training they need to enter the field prepared and confident. Because of her mom’s experience, Carey knew that taking the EPH course is “the only way to successfully pass the NJ REHS exam and really comprehensively get your qualifications together.”

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“There was just so much good material that it was overwhelmingly a positive experience.”

-Carey, on the OCPE EPH course

Carey landed her job as a Public Health Coordinator with OCPE by taking the EPH course in the summer of 2008.

Enjoying EPH

Unlike some EPH students, who return for REHS training after having been out of school and in the workforce for some time, Carey had the benefit of being used to sitting through class and studying hard. That does not mean the course was a breeze for her, though. “The EPH class gives you that really intense experience where you make it or break it,” she says. The hours were long, but Carey was excited for the new material she was learning (“chlorinated chemistry was awesome!” she says), knowing that it was bringing her leaps and bounds closer to fulfilling a lifelong goal of landing an environmental health job. She explains, “There was just so much good material that it was overwhelmingly a positive experience.”

The Silver Lining to a Bad Economy

Despite her superstar credentials and passing the NJ REHS exam, Carey was not able to get an REHS job right away. Her class was a particularly large one, and since more and more jobs are being cut because of the economy, she knew there would not be enough to go around. Instead, she found a related job through the EPH course: she is currently a Public Health Coordinator with OCPE, using her environmental policy major and REHS license in a different way. “I’m getting to use the technical expertise that I have as well as involve the policy stuff that I’m interested in,” she explains, by working on grant-based bioterrorism-related projects.

She may not have landed the job she wanted right away, but working at OCPE has opened other doors and given her an alternate path to her dream job as a health officer. “The work that I’m doing now would assist me in better doing the big picture public health,” she says, not unlike what she would do as a public health officer in the future. Her job affords her the opportunity to work on what she cares about from a different approach in the same place where she received her public health training. “If you’re interested in fighting for public health and going out there and literally making the world a better place...if you’re interested in doing that, and you think it’s really worth it, the class is absolutely necessary, and absolutely fantastic.”

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