

## Options for Educating the Next Generation 1-12-18

Health agents are a greying generation, overall. Let's face it, most people aren't even aware of the position. Most colleges aren't either. There are higher education programs teaching public health but that doesn't mean they are preparing young people to become health agents. They study trends in epidemiology and they study research, and learn how to use data. They may become researchers themselves. But after all that expensive university education, will they work in local public health?

As our high school seniors wonder about their futures, look at colleges and then wonder about their finances, many worry if they will be able to afford the loans. Will their job pay enough? Will their work be challenging?

At a recent conference I was introduced to another option. This opportunity offers an education for free! In fact, it offers housing, food and a stipend to learn what they teach, and they get to travel! It is the age-old apprenticeship concept. This is how the world used to prepare the next generation.

I don't know how many of these programs exist, but I would like to tell you about one because it is connected to public health. The program teaches students about water, wastewater and stormwater solutions. We will always need water. It is a precious commodity currently being wasted and taken for granted. Even wastewater should not be wasted! Some areas of drought are beginning to see the advantage of re-using treated wastewater. Don't most people take it for granted? Well, they do until it doesn't work, or the groundwater becomes polluted. Stormwater is a huge source of pollution to our water bodies and in the next year or so, you will begin to hear more about that as your town or city begins to spend a lot of money to address that problem, under orders from Departments of Environmental Protection. It has been a frequently addressed topic in Halifax, as we apply for grants to reduce stormwater pollution to improve the health of the ponds and lakes.

The University of Prescott offers an exciting apprenticeship program on these three issues; issues that will remain and that need solutions and innovations.

From their brochure: "The University of Prescott is a two-year educational program which provides a solid foundation for a career in the waterworks industry.

Students accepted into the program become full-time apprentices of the company and are paid a stipend. Upon graduation, students are placed in permanent positions within the company based on skills, abilities, aptitude and company needs.'

Each student is assigned a mentor. I love that!

Can it get any better? Yes, it can! Each student receives health benefits, life insurance and all other employee benefits. Even their travel expenses are paid by the company, which is located in nine states.

Wondering the pay scale is for this industry, I looked at <https://www.indeed.com/cmp/American-Water-Works-Association/salaries>

Fifty to ninety thousand can be earned, from sales, to manager, to technical project manager and over 100 thousand for a director. Not bad and that is without one hundred to two hundred thousand owed in school loans.

For more information, contact the Office of Admissions, The University of Prescott, Everett J. Prescott, Inc, PO Box 600, Gardner, ME 04345. Or apply online at [www.EJPrescott.com](http://www.EJPrescott.com) Or call 800 357 2447.

I have not received any gifts or favors from EJ Prescott or Prescott University. I don't know anyone there. I simply want to pass along the opportunity they offer. I have seen the company represented at conferences but did not know about their apprenticeship program until recently.

While this company university prepares future workers in a field important to public health, it is not specifically preparing them to become health agents. One route for becoming a health agent is also not dependent on four years of higher education. Becoming a registered sanitarian (R.S) requires some higher education classes in math and science. Once approved to qualify for the R.S, exam, the student can independently study for that exam. Independent study measured by successfully passing a rigorous exam is another way to educate the next generation. I will tell you more about the R.S. path another time.

Isn't it nice to know there are options?

*Cathleen Drinan is the health gent for Halifax. She can be reached at 781 293 6768 or [cdrinan@town.halifax.ma.us](mailto:cdrinan@town.halifax.ma.us)*