Is there one lesson you learned about improving health and well-being that you could transfer to another setting?

This program helped me realize that you always need to take an idea one step further in order to make lasting effects in the well-being of all humans. Say that a new drug is developed that can halt the progression of cancer. That is great, but what comes next? How will I market this drug? How much will this drug cost? If it's an anticancer drug, it is likely very expensive. Will the people who need it most be able to afford it? People experiencing environmental racism may be exposed to many chemicals that can cause cancer, but due to their socioeconomic status they are left unable to get drugs that can help them get better.

Describe what the academic and classroom experience (if any) was like on this program.

There was minimal classroom work for this fieldwork experience, as it was mainly focused on gaining exposure to different public health fields by physically going to organizations and seeing what they do. However, the classroom lectures/discussions we had at the beginning of the week were crucial in understanding why/how the organizations operate the way that they do. For example, at the beginning of the week we learned a lot about the different ways lead affects the body from experts in various disciplines.

What was the most memorable moment of your field experience?

We went to the beach on a terribly cold May day, very windy and cloudy with temperatures in the low fifties, to meet with Clean Lakes Alliance. Despite the weather, we did activities such as lake trivia and took water samples to learn about what their volunteers do. I found it really inspiring as they talked about how their volunteers were Madison citizens who simply wanted to help keep our lakes clean and healthy for everybody. I love living in a community that is so committed to helping each other in any way that they can.

What’s one tip or piece of advice you would give to others considering your program?

I want to remind people that even though you are not going abroad for the program, there is still a very relevant global health aspect. Not to discredit the tireless efforts of volunteers working in other countries, but I feel as if we need to take care of public health problems here before we tell other people how to run their public health efforts.

Do you think having participated in this program makes you more prepared for a career in public health?

This program made me realize there are more ways to help people than being a doctor. In fact, it was emphasized in the program that public health measures have saved more people than doctors. This makes sense, as public health helps prevent diseases/death and doctors tend to come into the picture after disease has occurred in an individual. While I still want to become a physician, this fieldwork made me decide I’d like to pursue an MD/MPH, and I would like to act as an educator for other physicians in how to look for certain illnesses (e.g. lead poisoning) and provide the best care/information for their patients.