



“The first time I visited LEAF, the students were preparing to perform at the New Hampshire Theater Guild Festival,” explains LEAF senior Ella Mack. “ I helped paint a set. I really liked the environment. Honestly, after my visit I wanted to start going to LEAF right away. I was excited about all the artistic things that are a huge part of the school. I liked the looseness of it. The school was so small. I really liked that part. I liked the location and the building is super cool. It seemed like everyone was part of one big

group.”

Ella says, “All the teachers at LEAF have made a difference for her.” Humanities teacher Chris Becker, Food and Garden teacher Ellen Denny, former STEM teacher Joe Quimby, Our Planet Our Footprint teacher Marty Castriotta, founding director Dakota Benedetto, IT specialist Ken Hart, and Community Connections Coordinator, Judy Hoffman. “All of the teachers have helped me stay interested in the subjects and offered support when I needed it. I have made really good connections with all of the teachers here. They try to give you things they think you would be interested in. They are all easy to talk to and super helpful. I really appreciate them being teachers.”



Pottery internship teacher, Barb Davis “has been my mentor. She has taught me how to do pottery and how to run the pottery studio. The studio is such a nice comforting space to be in.”



Ella has many classes over the years that she has enjoyed. “Humanities has always been super fun and interesting for me. I really enjoy talking to Chris. He is always interested in talking about anything.”

“Art classes have also been really helpful to develop my skills. Dakota is a great art teacher and she has a lot of experience. I have had the opportunity to incorporate art into many of my projects here at LEAF and that is super important to me.”

“I love to cook and have enjoyed the kitchen classes with Ellen. Ellen has been one of my favorite teachers. I like that we do free lunch here. The kitchen classes teach us really useful skills for the real world. We learn how to cook and how to clean properly.”

“Science classes offer labs and I really enjoy doing hands-on things.”

“I have also liked my Kung Fu class. It is a great opportunity. Not a lot of schools offer Kung Fu and teacher Vinny (Sodder from the Golden Phoenix School of Chinese Martial Arts) is so cool.”

Ella’s dream job is to be a full time veterinarian, an archaeologist, or a potter. “I can’t choose.”

One of Ella's favorite memories from her time at LEAF is "the cupcake wars from freshman year." Students competed as a member of their kitchen team. "The theme was flavors from around the world. We found recipes from different countries. My group chose Mexico. We experimented with the cupcake recipe. We made posters to go along with the cupcakes. Ours was the most well decorated. We made fondant flowers for each cupcake. We definitely learned some stuff! The competition was then held during exhibit night. "We let people taste all the cupcakes and vote for the best one."

In the fall, Ella will be attending the University of New Hampshire and studying pre-veterinary medicine. " I am still not 100% sure I want to become a veterinarian but I am really interested in it." Ella was accepted at all 4 universities she applied to: University of Massachusetts-Amherst, the University of Connecticut, the University of Rhode Island, and the University of New Hampshire. She received generous merit scholarships at all 4 universities.

The best advice Ella has for incoming LEAF students is to "just follow the rules of the school and be respectful. Make connections with the awesome teachers here and take advantage of internships and the community connections that you can make here."

Ella points out LEAF is special because "the teachers enjoy what they are doing. I think the environment here is also good for teachers."

5 Fun Facts about Ella:

1). My favorite flavor of ice cream is Perry's White Lightning. It has dark chocolate ice cream with stripes of white chocolate fudge and mint.

2).I was super into dinosaurs when I was a kid. I've always liked the Ankylosaurus.

3).I have always loved animals. There is a picture of me as a little kid holding a giant boa constrictor. I think my mom looks at that picture and has some regrets about allowing me to do that.

4). I have always really liked biology.

5). I love traveling. I went to Italy with my grandmother when I was 13 for two weeks. My grandmother is an artist and she works in Italy and lives there half of the year. I got to experience what it is really like to live there, not just the tourist things.