



“What is this? It looks like a barn.” Senior Emma Touchette remembers her first impression of LEAF Charter School. “LEAF has not always been a school and it shows. There are machines and art everywhere.” Emma found out about LEAF from a flier her mom picked up when they were trying to determine which high school Emma should go to. Every school they had visited in the past left Emma feeling nervous. On the drive out, she remembers thinking how rural the school was and how she had never been in this area before. Noticing the mountains in the distance,

Emma thought about how she would like to take a picture of the mountain everyday and write about the changes through the seasons. She walked into LEAF and she immediately felt comfortable. She did not have that nervous feeling she had at the other schools she had visited. Everyone seemed very friendly and the welcoming committee included two happy dogs. She knew LEAF was the right school for her right away.

Now in her senior year, Emma is able to reflect on the classes she has enjoyed over the years. “I liked all of the classes and learned something about myself in all of them.” “I really enjoyed the coding class because it is something I had no idea I would be good at but I was.” Being part of The LEAF Out Loud school magazine class gave Emma an opportunity to write her first creative piece and she really liked it. “The students in LEAF Out Loud share what they are passionate about and are very open. Equine studies was a lot of fun too. We got to go off campus a lot and got hands-on experience learning how to be comfortable and safe around horses.”

Emma also participated in an internship at the Shedd Porter Memorial Library for most of her junior year. “I remember I was a bit nervous when I started but my confidence really grew. Helping with the children’s program, I learned a lot about children. Interacting with the customers, I got to experience a lot of different people.”

“Teachers at LEAF are special. They are really nice and supportive of students doing whatever they are interested in. They have a way of becoming friends and getting to know all the students.”

Community Connections Coordinator, Judy Hoffman has helped Emma with internships and navigating the college admissions process. “She has helped me with creative projects that keep me interested. When we were remote during Covid, Judy and I would have good conversations about the books we were reading.”

Humanities teacher Chris Becker is “ so respectful and informed. He has encouraged me with my writing skills and has helped me feel intelligent. His passion for history is contagious.”

Humanities teacher Hillary O'Brien is “really nice and fun to hang out with.” The summer between Emma's Sophomore and Junior years Hillary ran a summer program for students who love books. The focus was on forbidden fiction, books that have been banned at times. The group got together once a week to discuss the books they were reading.

Founding director Dakota Benedetto “ is just amazing! LEAF was started by a really great group of people.”

Farm and Garden Coordinator, Ellen Denny is “ super sweet and helped me feel comfortable at LEAF my first couple of years here. She makes good food and accommodates any food restrictions. Everyone has enough to eat.”

One of Emma's favorite memories of her time at LEAF is last year's prom! She enjoyed being part of the prom committee and sitting outside in the sun making the decorations especially the lopsided stars. It was “ a lot of fun because it was LEAF's first official prom. It was super planned out for such a small school. We had tents and a dance floor. The music was fun. We had a live band and a DJ.”

Emma has been accepted at 10 colleges and universities, Hofstra University, University of Glasgow, Lycoming College, University of New Hampshire, Castleton University, Husson College, University of Southern Maine, Plymouth State University, Northern Vermont University, and the University of Maine, Farmington. She is still exploring her options and has not committed to any school yet. She does plan to go straight to college after her LEAF graduation this June. She is not sure which major she will pursue, she thinks maybe she will study archeology.

Emma has some advice for upcoming students. “Try to really appreciate how special the school is and all the things you get to experience here that you wouldn't at another school. Appreciate things like Mercy and Molly, the school dogs, and having a small campus so you know everyone by name. LEAF has really great teachers. It is such a nice community, started by really great people.”

Emma sums up her experience at LEAF, “I am so happy with who I have become since I have been here. Obviously I have more to learn but I feel like I have gotten such a good knowledge base to go out into the world. I am much more confident. I am happy. I am more outgoing. I have learned a lot about myself. LEAF has helped me to figure out what I am good at and has nurtured that and has given me the resources to expand that. I have had really good relationships with the teachers here so I will know what to look for in future teachers. It is so important to have a good relationship person to person.”

5 Fun Facts about Emma

1). "I love clothes and I love getting clothes that make me feel good about myself. Last year, I was really into clothes from the early 1900's but now I have found a good balance between vintage and new. I love pairing clothes up to brighten up an outfit that has gotten boring to wear."

2)." I love history. I really love learning about all the things that have happened and accumulating all that knowledge. I like being informed about things that have happened in the past."

3). "I have a special love for Scotland and have been learning Scottish Gaelic. I got into the University of Glasgow and I am considering that school."

4). "I am not afraid! When I have an idea about something I want to try. I do it. I get super excited when I am excited about something"

5). Most people know this one about me. "I love reading. I love how reading can take me on an adventure or be relaxing. There are so many stories about so many things. So many different genres. I love talking about books with other people. I used to read a lot of young adult novels, horror and fantasy, books like Lord of the Rings. Then I was into historical fiction. Then mysteries, I really like Agatha Christie. Now I read all kinds of books. People just give me books because they know I love to read."