



Lena Pos
Senior Profile
2020-2021

LEAF Charter School, located in Alstead, NH is a tuition-free public high school. It's vision is a community of learners inspired to create, collaborate, and contribute, both in and out of school settings. Lena is a member of the inaugural class at LEAF Charter School. "I was unhappy in

[conventional] public school. I hated going and I was losing interest in all of my hobbies. My aunt works at LEAF and she told my mom about the school. My mom told me and I liked the idea of the school. I had been to the Mole Hill Theater, where the school is located, a few years earlier with my Dad to listen to a band play so I was familiar with the location but I couldn't really imagine how it could be a school. The summer before LEAF opened I attended some open houses and tours for interested students. LEAF also offered a weekly movie night showing the whole Harry Potter series. I attended some of these nights." For the Harry Potter nights the staff dressed up as characters from the stories.



Wand Workshop

"I put in an application to attend LEAF and hoped for the best. The day I got the letter I was in, I was really excited. After the first day, I remember coming home and feeling a lot happier!"

Memories surrounding lunch particularly stand out for Lena. Students at LEAF have a one-hour each day for lunch with time enough to enjoy the free home made delicious and nutritious meal from LEAF's Food and Garden Program and still have time to get outside and get some fresh air, play a game of frisbee with their friends, relax and take some quiet time to read a book, or just socialize with friends. Lena remembers one day her first year when all the students lined up the tables all together so we could all sit together and tell corny jokes. " I remember my friend

heard the punchline to one of the jokes wrong and she couldn't stop laughing. It was a beautiful day and it was really fun." Lena has also appreciated the opportunity to take nature walks with her friends and take advantage of the beauty that surrounds the LEAF school.

"I like a lot of teachers at LEAF. A lot of teachers are really cool. When STEM teacher, Chris Aguda-Brown was in the process of interviewing to become a teacher at LEAF, he was touring the building, a student asked him to do a heel click and he did!" Everyone knew Chris would fit right in.

"Art classes are my favorite," says Lena. "I have always taken at least one art class each year, some years two. Art classes at LEAF are different. Art classes I had taken in the past buried my passion for art because I was focused on the grade." Lena appreciates founding director and art teacher Dakota Benedetto's teaching style. "In Dakota's class we are encouraged to find our own style instead of just doing the assignment. Dakota asks us what we want to learn and then adds to the class. I am able to see my progress and how my art has improved over the years."

Lena also appreciates the yoga classes she has taken with yoga teacher Elizabeth Zimmer. "In class we have learned about ways to relax, learned about different chakras and scents that affect your body."

As a student at LEAF, Lena has participated in two internships. Her first internship was at Keene Daycare. Her responsibilities included helping kids get dressed, helping with art projects, playing inside and outside with the children and, helping at snack and lunch time.

Lena's second internship was at Free Time Book House with artist Sam Burhoe. "One of the main things I got out of this internship was stepping way out of my comfort zone and trying new art related things I probably wouldn't have tried otherwise. Throughout this internship, I was pushed to do things that, I'm not going to lie, scared me a little bit. Many times I felt like I was doing things wrong, and some of the challenges were things I would have shied away from or actively avoided in a different setting. I couldn't do that during this internship, it gave me the opportunity to challenge myself and gave me a safe environment to take risks in."

Lena has been accepted at all four colleges she applied to: Bennington College, Franklin Pierce University, Plymouth State University, and Keene State College. She plans to take a gap year and then attend Franklin Pierce. She is not sure what her major will be yet. She is interested in a variety of careers including preschool teacher, journalist, artist, and marine biologist.

LEAF is different from other schools. "Students get a voice. We help make decisions and shape what happens at school. Classes are catered to our interests. Dakota really wants to hear our opinions. At first I thought that was weird but gradually I have grown and I speak out more about my opinions. Sometimes our debates turn into full blown arguments and that is because we value the culture at LEAF enough to speak up. LEAF is all about acceptance and welcoming everyone. We are willing to speak up to defend those values. Problems can always be worked through. Last week at our morning meeting, I spoke up in front of the whole school about

something that I cared about. When I began at LEAF, this would have been way out of my comfort zone.”

What advice does Lena offer future LEAF students? “Open your mind and listen to other opinions and that will help you understand the world better. Let others speak their mind. People don’t have to agree with you. Let them have a voice too. Don’t assume that people’s opinions are always the same. People learn and change and grow.”