



LEAF senior Mia Ahern found out about LEAF from a friend that she had horseback riding lessons with. “My friend was going to LEAF and she told me that she really liked it. I decided to apply to come to LEAF my junior year..”

Mia remembers her first impression of LEAF, “ I thought it was weird that there were machines everywhere. LEAF seemed to have good teachers but it wasn’t like a normal school.”

“ I have liked all my teachers. I really liked Joe (Quimby, former STEM teacher). He was super caring. If I was upset he would ask if I needed to talk.”

Mia is grateful to Community Connections Coordinator, Judy Hoffman, because “she helped me go through the process to get credit for my internship.”

Former Humanities and Equine studies teacher Hillary O’Brien was “always caring and we talked about horses. We worked with a lot of different horses in equine studies.”

Humanities teacher, Chris Becker “is always there for you when you need him.”

“I loved equine studies because I always wanted to do something with horses as a career and this class helped me explore different careers with horses. There are more than you think!”

“I liked humanities class because they explain things in ways that I can understand, I really liked learning about Fredrick Douglas who was born a slave but became free and then got rich. He purchased slaves and freed them.”

While at LEAF Mia participated in an internship at Elm Farm. “I think I grew a lot with this opportunity. It felt really good being trusted to work with the horses. I enjoyed working with the girl I worked with. It was a really good experience in the sense of having responsibility. I think I grew a lot in the responsibility aspect of everything. I loved helping my co-worker and getting to know her better and helping her be more comfortable with the horses.” Mia’s supervisor at the farm says “ Mia definitely benefited the program by providing extra support for the staff with chores and the different horse care that was needed. Mia has been a positive influence on the community at Elm Farm with her positive attitude and excellent work ethic.”

Some of Mia’s favorite memories of her time at LEAF include “ making a lot of new friends and always having them by my side and making connections with teachers. I have enjoyed the fun

trips like hiking with (STEM teacher), Hanah (LaBarre) to Hinsdale and hiking on a trail not a whole lot of people know about.”

After graduation Mia plans to get a full time job and an apartment. She hopes to get into the Med. Tech. program at the hospital. She will continue working with horses at two different farms.

Mia offers the following advice to incoming LEAF students, “stick with your gut and do what you believe in. Keep up with the work. Make new friends. It is a small school so it is easy to make friends.”

Summing up her experience at LEAF Mia says, “LEAF is just better. It is more inclusive with room for people to grow and become a better person. No one is judged for who they are or who they want to be. I feel like I found myself at LEAF. I didn’t know what I wanted to do or who I was when I started here. Now I know exactly what I want to do and who I want to be.”

5 Fun Facts about Mia:

- 1). I love horses.
- 2). I love to hang out with my friends.
- 3). My favorite TV show is Heartland because it is about horses. The main character’s mom dies saving a horse and the show is about the bond between the daughter and the horse.
- 4). I would love to travel to Germany and Canada.
- 5). My favorite food is pasta alfredo.