



Opal Wright  
2020-2021  
Senior Profile

“I know if I wasn’t at LEAF there would be something missing in my life. I have made a place for myself at LEAF “ says LEAF senior Opal Wright. Opal was home schooled before she came to LEAF. “Every school I had visited felt stale and sterile, walking into LEAF was different.” Opal loves that LEAF strives to be an inclusive community. “Plus our school is in a machine shop and that adds to the general ambience.”

Opal has been part of the LEAF community since the summer before the school opened in the fall of 2017. When she went to tour the building and talk with founding director, Dakota Benedetto “I got really excited!” Opal spent the summer before school opened helping get things set up and helping in the

garden and landscaping. She remembers “it felt very dynamic, everything was growing, changing, and in the works.”

Opal thinks all the teachers at LEAF have made an impact on her but she has appreciated some particular teachers. “ Coming to LEAF was my first school experience and I was very nervous”, Dakota Benedetto made “the space very comfortable for me”. Humanities teacher Chris Becker encouraged her to “express my opinions.” Math teacher, Sean Marden valued “the steps taken to arrive at a final product. The steps were equally, if not more important, than the final product. He was interested in how I arrived at my answers.” Hillary O’Malley has been a “big support person and a comfortable presence.” STEM teacher Joe Quimby “has been very helpful, encouraging me to speak up in class discussions which I **hate** but is really helpful. Also if I am stressed out he is really helpful.”

Asked about her favorite memories of her time here at LEAF, Opal remembers her first year at LEAF when the school celebrated Thanksgiving. “I felt such a sense of community. Everyone was sitting together in a big circle at big wooden tables.” Opal also loves exhibit nights. “I love the whole exhibit night process. Whenever we have an exhibit night, students are so high strung and stressed out trying to get everything ready. But it is such a team-building exercise. Everyone helps each other. One person might have tons of work to hang up and another student will help. Getting through it together builds camaraderie. Then throughout the night we share little knowing looks.”

Opal’s favorite class at LEAF was a class she took her first year called Sustainable Entrepreneurship. In this class each student had to create their own business. “We created a tangible product, gave presentations, did marketing, and sold our product. I felt like this class was so far out of my comfort zone when I finished I felt extra cool that I had stuck it out and actually created a business.”

Opal has participated in two internships while attending LEAF. Her first internship was at the Shedd-Porter Memorial Library. Some of the highlights of her internship at the library included “successfully putting plastic on library books. The wrap used is super sticky so you had to hold 8 million places all at once.” Opal’s art internship at Free Time Book House “helped me realize that art doesn’t have to be perfect. Until this internship, I had always thought that my art had to be finished and pristine if it was going to justify the time I had spent on it. What I learned is that the actual goal of art is literally just to create things in a way that’s enjoyable.”

After graduation in June, Opal plans to take a gap year and build a tiny house then she intends to go to college. She has lots of dreams about what her future may hold. She would love to be a writer and an artist, live in a tiny house and keep bees and garden. She would also like to travel and help people. She also hopes to gain some business experience working in a bookstore or nonprofit. She is also interested in becoming an art therapist or doing something in healthcare.

Opal’s parting advice is for LEAF students to “identify what you want and need then speak up!”