

## HCA student shares pottery lessons on service trip



Amelia English (center) took the pottery skills she learned at the Hopkinton Center for the Arts and taught them to children at an orphanage in the Dominican Republic during a service trip in February.

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Contributing Writer

A student at the Hopkinton Center for the Arts took her desire to help others and her passion for the arts on an “eye-opening experience” in February.

Amelia English traveled to the Dominican Republic during February school break through the organization Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos (Our Little Brothers and Sisters). NPH supports orphaned, abandoned and disadvantaged boys and girls in Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru.

English, who is fluent in Spanish, spent her days working in the kitchen, teaching English to students ages 6-18, and harvesting and planting in fields. But most impactful of all, according to the 16-year-old Natick resident, was the time spent working in the therapy center for children with special needs teaching about one of her major passions — pottery.

English has been studying ceramics for the past five years under the guidance of HCA teacher and Hopkinton resident Hana Reilly. Prior to arriving at the HCA three years ago with the opening of the ceramics studio, Reilly was English’s teacher at another facility. Knowing what a “caring and passionate” teacher Reilly was, English followed her to Hopkinton to continue her training.

Those years of skills came in handy when English found herself in an orphanage that had a pottery wheel that hadn’t been used in many years. When she found out that the art instructor at the orphanage didn’t know how to use the wheel, English got to work training him.

“It was a large, heavy wheel with a foot pedal,” English said. “I taught him how to use it, and by the end of the week I was so impressed with what he had created.”

English spent time each day working with the instructor and the kids at the orphanage on ceramics, passing on her knowledge and love of creating masterpieces from a lump of clay. She even used a little old-fashioned ingenu-

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ity as she gathered sticks, strings and other basic materials to use as tools for their projects.

“I wanted to share this with them, to share my passion,” she said. “In many places art isn’t valued as much. But it’s part of their culture and it should be valued.”

Art is highly valued back in Hopkinton, where the HCA’s mission is to “cultivate an inclusive and vibrant community committed to the exploration and enjoyment of the visual and performing arts.”

The HCA is a non-profit organization that offers classes in visual arts, theater, music and dance. Students at all levels can attend classes to learn more about an art form that interests them.

“I find wheel throwing very calming and stress relieving,” English said. “You have to put a lot of focus on what you are doing, and it blocks everything else out.”

English said that she has enjoyed her time at the HCA, as her teacher has created an environment where she feels free to express her creativity and is not afraid to make mistakes.

Said English: “It is so much fun.”