

In Honor of His Grandmother

David Sharkey '17 will teach English to speakers of other languages

Thursday, August 3, 2017



David Sharkey was in an inner-city Italian middle school teaching English in the spring of 2016 when he found himself making the sort of mistake that all new teachers dread.



DAVID SHARKEY'S NEXT STOP IS A HIGH SHOOOL IN MADRID, SPAIN.

“I was standing in front of the class for the first time and writing on the board and I looked over and saw I spelled something wrong,” he said. “I was so nervous.”

But like any good educator, Sharkey turned the gaffe into a learning opportunity. “The classroom was a place with a lot of cultural exchange,” he said. “If they could see me struggling to learn their language, but also see I was successful at it, then they knew they could do it, too.”

Studying abroad in Ascoli Piceno, Italy, and at Cambridge University in England were the highlights of a rich four years at UNH, according to Sharkey, who pursued a dual major in English

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teaching and Italian studies.

“I’ve always wanted to be a teacher. I really owe a lot to my professors for helping steer me in the right direction for those majors, and allowing me to explore who I might want to become,” he said.

During his semester in Italy, Sharkey shared an apartment with other UNH students. He received the full Italian cultural experience, he said — which meant everything from fresh pasta dinners to navigating an unfamiliar city. “It really forced me to learn the language — I had to learn to survive and get food and all those other normal, everyday things,” he said.

Sharkey’s career in education is in honor of his grandmother, a longtime educator who taught English for speakers of other languages. After graduation, his next stop is Madrid, where he plans to work as an assistant teacher in a high school.

“It will be a great opportunity to practice the teaching methods and the resources I’ve acquired here in a setting that’s not high-stakes,” he said. To prepare, he’s been teaching himself Portuguese and Spanish by reading news sites and listening to Spanish-language podcasts.

“I really do love English, and that’s why I want to teach it,” he said. “Being able to model how I speak English and how I think of the language is fun, and it’s why I want to go into an environment where kids are learning English as a second language.”

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