

Tara Wells
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American Friends of Herculaneum Scholarship Report

For June and July of 2023 I had the pleasure of working as a ceramics specialist on the Pompeii I.14 Project, directed by Dr. Allison Emmerson of Tulane University. I am incredibly grateful to the American Friends of Herculaneum for the generous grant I received, which played a significant role in my ability to participate in the project. The AFoH funds aided in my costs of living while abroad, but the grant went mostly towards the cost of round trip travel from the U.S. to Italy – an aspect of archaeological projects in the Mediterranean that generally makes such opportunities inaccessible for students without sufficient resources to afford it on their own.

Thanks to the support of the AFoH, I was able to contribute to the long-standing and ongoing work of better understanding the ancient past of the Campania region. More specifically, this project in Pompeii adds to our knowledge of matters of urban life in Roman Campania. The excavation of Insula I.14 is particularly important because it shines light on the lives of people living at the margins of the city, moving us forward from scholarly traditions of ignoring individuals outside of the highest societal ranks.

My work focused on the ceramics found during the excavation process. I assisted with sorting and documenting the pottery, including drawing vessels and inputting information into the project's database such as quantitative data as well as noteworthy features of particular sherds. Studying a site's ceramics in this way can greatly help in dating particular contexts. It can also indicate contact or trade between different peoples by revealing details like a clay's origins and where it traveled from to arrive in its place of deposit, or suggesting the spread of particular developments in ceramic techniques and styles. Such information will be crucial as research and interpretations of the site continue to grow. Again, I am grateful to the AFoH for their support of this important project, and especially for their assistance in making it possible for me to have a role in it.



Image Caption: Tara focusing on sorting and identifying pottery.



Image Caption: Tara carrying cassette of pottery from site to “the Monster” of Pompeii where teams including Ceramics, Finds, and Data carry out their work.