



## SAY HELLO TO OUR NEW TEAM MEMBERS!

Liam Fitzpatrick and Nate Jacobus are recent Whitworth graduates who will be working with Utmost Athletics this year! We are so excited to welcome them to the Utmost Team!

Cornelio and Santiago De Jesus Victoriano have been with Mowtown for a few months and they're doing a fantastic job. We appreciate their hard work and attention to detail!



## A STORY OF FORGE LEADERSHIP: BRYAN ABLEIDINGER

In 2015 Bryan Ableidinger and Matt Overton started laying the groundwork for what would become The Columbia Future Forge and Bryan has served as the Forge's Chairman of the Board since The Forge was founded in 2017. Bryan describes himself as being entrepreneurial from a young age. He says, "Studying and learning about good businesses is just part of my nature." Bryan's professional background includes being a Navy and commercial pilot prior to returning to the PNW to help run his family's business, Parkrose Hardware. Under his leadership, Parkrose expanded its Portland location and opened an additional store in East Vancouver. Now Bryan manages commercial properties and pursues his interest in woodworking, metal working, and restoring hotrods (his favorite is a 1956 red Ford pickup truck with a Corvette suspension!).

As soon as you meet Bryan and begin to hear his story, some themes immediately emerge. Bryan's calling and purpose in life is to help others grow to be "healthy contributing citizens." He highly values personal responsibility, accountability, and independence. Since 1989, one of the ways Bryan has invested in these values has been through his involvement in building houses as part of high school youth work camps sponsored by Columbia Presbyterian Church. He loves seeing students gain new skills and confidence, grow in capabilities and accomplishments, build comradery, and learn from their mistakes.

Bryan met his first Forge mentee at work camp. Alex Neal, now 20, was a freshman in high school and was on the "wood crew" with the somewhat difficult assignment of hand-sawing boards into exactly 22 ½" lengths. After one of her failed attempts, she recalls Bryan teasing her that, "This is mistake #1. If you get to #3 the unusable board will become an 'encouragement device.'" She reports that all her wood blocks were straight from there on out! Alex went on to be one the apprentices (mentees) in the first Forge group and had Bryan as her blacksmith (mentor). Alex is an artist. Bryan is an engineer. But they have valued and maintained their relationship ever since. Bryan says he's grown to be interested in Alex's art and to use his brain differently when he's around her. For his part, he wanted Alex to learn how to save money, solve problems, and make plans related to her future goals. He tells the story of successfully encouraging Alex to save money for college only to see it literally go down the drain when she dropped her laptop in the bathtub, a costly but valuable life lesson. Alex, now a student at Savannah College of Art and Design, says that she notices and appreciates the amount of confidence, focus, and purpose she has as a college sophomore compared with many of her classmates.

Another of Bryan's apprentices, Trey Natherson, was initially drawn to The Forge's drone piloting program when he heard about it through a presentation at Camas High School. When Bryan saw Trey's Forge application, he immediately recognized Trey's entrepreneurial spirit and wanted to be his mentor. Trey did not end up pursuing drones, but has continued to participate in the Forge trainings and remains in relationship with Bryan. Trey is now a student at WSU-V and is continuing to design and implement new business ideas. Regarding his ongoing relationship with Bryan, Trey says, "I could write a book on how my maturity has grown because of Bryan." Trey appreciates how Bryan challenges and holds him accountable to the world outside of himself as well. He says, "Every time we hang out, almost the first thing out of his mouth is 'What are you doing for other people?'" Trey describes Bryan as "really humble" even though he's achieved success in business

## THANK YOU!

We are grateful for the continued support we have received from donors, customers and athletes throughout this year which has brought many challenges to our world. Your generosity helps us to reach out to our community and plan for the future.

### GIVE!

[www.thecolumbiafutureforge.com](http://www.thecolumbiafutureforge.com)

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Utmost is holding outdoor workouts with modifications for health and safety. Athletes & coaches are glad to be back working out together!



**A STORY CONTINUED:** and in life. "I've grown to realize how privileged and blessed I am to have the support and freedom to try new things." He will be forever grateful that Bryan entered his life and has walked with him for these last several formative years.

Bryan looks back on the last few years and is surprised where his Forge journey has taken him. In the early days, Bryan knew that The Forge had so much to offer students that he assumed youth would immediately flock to the trainings, which did not happen. Instead, today he is struck by the way The Forge is making unexpected connections with students – through Utmost Athletics, new school partnerships, and other ways students are finding The Forge. In the future, he still sees a possible "explosion" in how The Forge could help more and more students grow and learn important life skills. He looks forward to continuing to guide The Forge as it seeks to teach and encourage students to become the adults they were created to be.

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

Do you enjoy maintaining equipment or vehicles? Would you like to be part of a team that helps with lawn equipment maintenance periodically? Let us know! We'd love to have a group of people willing to serve in this way!



## THOUGHTS FROM MATT

Although our 2019-2020 Forge year did not wind down as we expected due to the COVID-19 cancellations and closures, the good news is that we have mostly good news!

**Mowtown** continues to operate with some safety restrictions in place. We are thankful for this because it allows us to provide steady employment for 3 employees.

**Utmost Athletics** suspended operations in the gym from mid-March to June but Ty continued to offer online workouts. We used this time to plan for the future and reorganize the gym space. Coach Ty continues to reach out to athletes where he can and encourages some of the mentors/coaches to do the same. The gym reopened on June 22nd with outside workouts!

**Forge Drone** program soldiers on. Marc Hartquist virtually gathered the "Dronies" to continue learning in the Spring. We are waiting to see how many of this year's participants will be able to take the culminating FAA pilot certification exam.

**Life Skills/Job Skills Trainings** - Thankfully, we made it through all of our Forge trainings just before the shut-downs hit in full force! Sadly, we had to cancel our year end celebration lunch and time of sharing for our Blacksmiths and Apprentices. We continue to build partnerships with employers in the community and connect them to students that have completed the Forge trainings. Blacksmiths continue to reach out to connect with and support their Apprentices.

More good news amidst the present turmoil is that the Forge is a stable organization, despite phased reopenings imposing limits on what we can do. The Forge's operational model of sustainable social enterprise is providing great security and stability right now. We are taking a cautious approach to all that is happening while continuing to pursue new partnerships and models for when we emerge from this time as we continue to promote mentoring relationships that help students to become "Life Ready. Job Ready."

