

## COLUMBIA FUTURE FORGE - HAYES FREEDOM PARTNERSHIP



*Matt Overton and Kelly Johnson*

One of the Forge's creative and exciting new partnerships is with Hayes Freedom High School (HFHS) teacher Kelly Johnson. In 2013, after a career as a Supervising Production Engineer at a local manufacturing company, Kelly participated in his company's mentoring program with HFHS students and found it to be such a rewarding experience that he decided to change careers! Kelly became a Career and Technical Education (CTE) teacher and has been on the faculty at HFHS since 2017.

Kelly saw a need for "real world" guidance in preparing young people for success and independence after high school and he quickly became a fan of experience- and project-based learning. Inviting mentors and guests to his classroom became an excellent way to connect students with professionals and to introduce workplace expectations. Hayes' principal was familiar with the Forge and suggested that Kelly might want to explore a potential partnership. "After reviewing the mission, vision, and core

values of the Forge, I felt they were in alignment with Hayes Freedom and the Forge would be a perfect partner," he says. Kelly met with Forge Executive Director Matt Overton, and planning began on how to best work together for the greatest positive impact in the lives of students.

Matt and Kelly chose material from the Forge curriculum that dovetailed perfectly with Kelly's *Applied Communications* and *Personal and Career Readiness* courses. With COVID-19 restrictions requiring classes to be held via Zoom, Matt joined in twice a week and he and Kelly shared in teaching and interacting with freshmen students, "forging" new relationships. "Ninth grade is a stressful, transitional year for many students, so forming meaningful connections in their first year of high school can initiate the longest and strongest relationships possible," explains Kelly.

Kelly said, "The students were very engaged with Matt's lessons and storytelling. We made a great team and it was a lot of fun for everyone." He continues, "I'm excited for all students to return to the classroom, so that we can have more Forge adults in our class - that's where the real connection and relationship building can happen."

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## MEET MOWTOWN EMPLOYEE LUIS AVILA



Luis Avila has worked for Mowtown for a year and a half. Each Saturday Luis works at one of our large properties. Over time, he has grown to oversee another teen working with him. Not many sophomores in high school would be up to this, but Luis has stepped up to the challenge! He is responsible, polite and an extremely hard worker. Luis shows up, sees what needs to be done, works hard and asks for guidance when needed. We are grateful for Luis' work ethic, leadership, attention to detail, and kindness!

## [CLICK HERE TO GIVE](#)

The Columbia Future Forge was honored to be one of three organizations nominated in February for [100 Women Who Care](#) SW Washington chapter. This group meets quarterly to hear about the work of three local organizations. Each woman contributes \$100, so every quarter they are able to donate up to \$10,000 to various community non-profits! We are grateful for their generosity and valuable contributions to Clark County.

### CONTACT US

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A few months ago, an email from a student appeared in Kelly's inbox requesting that he ask Matt about part time job opportunities. Kelly recalls, "I was so happy to realize that the relationship between Hayes and the Forge was working! It was a great moment and I proudly reached out to Matt to pass along the student's request." Matt followed up immediately and connected the student to Mowtown Teen Lawn Care. The student did a great job on a Mowtown project and was thrilled to be able to buy Christmas gifts for their family from their own paycheck. The student has since worked on additional Mowtown jobs.

In the future, Kelly said he's looking forward to the day when the Forge has partnered with Hayes long enough that every student recognizes Forge mentors in the hallways, whether or not they have been students in Kelly's class. "I'm proud to be able to connect students with another group of adults from the community that cares about them and is willing to help guide and coach, even through some of the toughest moments of their lives," he concludes.

Additional new programs between Hayes Freedom and the Forge are already forming. Watch for future newsletters that will have updates about these exciting and creative endeavors!



## LIKE TO COOK?



We are excited to resume our weekly Young Adult lunch and Bible study on Sunday afternoons. This time together provides a wonderful opportunity for connection and conversation for young adults and coaches.

We are looking for volunteers who would be willing to provide a simple lunch for 15-20 people on a rotating or one time basis. This could be an opportunity for your family, friends or small group to serve together!

Email us at [utmostathletics@gmail.com](mailto:utmostathletics@gmail.com) or call Anne at 530-635-1672 for more information or to volunteer.



*Ted Buck leads a group in the Utmost outdoor facility*

## STUDENT CREWS ARE BACK!



For the past two months we have been able to have our student crews out consistently on Saturdays for special projects and yard clean-ups. For many of our students this is their first job and a great introduction to professionalism, problem solving, worksite safety and customer interactions.

When asked about working with Mowtown, Julisa Singleton said, "Along with landscaping knowledge and work ethic, it's helped me get a better grasp on basic things like the general flow of the workplace." Clara DeWitt commented, "I've enjoyed the sense of community while working. I have learned a lot, not just about landscaping, but about time management and teamwork."

