

Forge friends,

Let me tell you about Alex and Ed, two students we've met through our partnership with Hayes Freedom High School (HFHS) in Camas, WA. HFHS offers smaller class sizes and is able to be more responsive to the unique needs and learning styles of each student than the much larger Camas High School. These two students matter to HFHS and they matter to us.

Alex is a freshman who we met this fall during the 16-week character development course that we built for Hayes. I taught and a few Forge mentors joined in leading small group discussions. This year's class was a wonderful, unique bunch of teens and while this work is not always easy, it is beautiful. At the end of the semester, Alex let the teacher know that he wanted to get a job and we were so glad that our other Forge program, Mowtown Teen Lawn Care, stood waiting with employment opportunities.

On Alex's first day of work he was skipping to each task. The experience of having some responsibility and autonomy outside the house was fabulous. His parents, too, were excited that Alex had this opportunity. Next up, Alex will be working on a landscaping job that other Mowtown student employees designed and bid. We will spend some time after work to review Alex's goals for the year.

Ed is a different story. Ed is a HFHS senior who we only passed in the hallways and has not been in any of our classes. Ed sought out Kelly Johnson, the teacher who hosted us each week, because he was looking for volunteer hours for his senior project and had heard about the Forge and Mowtown. A few weeks later, Ed joined Mowtown on a new project we have been working on at a neighborhood park, Behren's Woods. This is a City of Vancouver project involving ivy removal from trees on a 4-acre plot. It's a giant mess out there. We like this type of project because while we don't generate revenue from it, it allows us to engage larger numbers of students at once. And that is the whole point really: Students, Mentors, Meaningful Conversation, Relationships, Skills. Full Life. Like Alex, we plan to take Ed through the goal setting exercises over the coming weeks.

I share this with you to show you the kinds of stories that walk through our doors. It is remarkable to have students seek us out on campus because of what we offer them at a comprehensive level. As I watched Alex and Ed climb the ladder to spray paint the Forge hammer and anvil logo on the side of our Youth Center (our tradition



for teens who get a job), I was again struck by how meaningful this work is. It builds confidence and friendships and creates hope. Whether you are a Mowtown customer, an Utmost gym rat, a heroic donor, or some other combination of those things... thank you. You were up on the ladder too in some way. The network of enterprises/programs/ministries that we are building is bringing life. Keep up the good work!!!

With Gratitude,
Matt Overton
Executive Director

EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES

This fall we chose to press 'pause' on our Sunday afternoon life skills trainings in order to reevaluate and consider new options for offering our basic trainings: Personality Profile, Professionalism, Goal Setting, and Money Management. Initially we were hesitant to do this, but as schools continue to deal with students struggling with record levels of anxiety, depression, and re-acclimation to the school environment, we were not able to hold our usual on-campus recruiting events. We also needed some time and space to discern how best to respond to the changing landscape for students, school, and life since the Forge was founded seven years ago.

This pause has allowed us to begin to re-imagine how we might accomplish our mission of life transformation through mentoring and jobs. Recently, two organizations have reached out to us to ask whether or not we would be willing to meet and discuss possibilities for some large scale long-term projects. Though we are still in the exploratory phase, and not yet sure if partnerships will materialize, this may allow us to engage larger numbers of Clark County students in scalable work and provide skills trainings at a central location. It is exciting to see these possibilities emerging and to think about the partnerships within our community that might better serve and prepare young adults to be "Life Ready. Job Ready."

We continue to be astounded by your generosity and support. It is with gratitude and humility that we say thank you for partnering with us to help young adults become "Life Ready. Job Ready."

- \$200 provides the main dish for our May Utmost Athletics dinner

- During the spring we have people that are in need of yard clean-ups and projects, but are no longer able to do the work themselves. We have a community fund that helps to offset the cost of these projects. If you'd like to donate to this fund please write "Mowtown donation" in the memo.

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[CLICK HERE TO GIVE](#)



SPRING IS HERE!

Does your yard have some needs? Give Mowtown a call! Our hard working employees can get your yard spruced up for spring! We provide many services including aeration, fertilization, pressure washing, weeding, mulch installation and more. We are able to employ teens, many in their first jobs, to work alongside our adult crew on the weekends. This provides a wonderful opportunity for students to learn, gain job experience, problem solve, and have deeper conversations about life.

Visit our website: mowtownteenlawncare.com

or give us a call at
360-210-2852



The recent snowstorms provided ample opportunities for our student and adult crews to clear the sidewalks and parking lot at Columbia Presbyterian Church prior to Sunday services. Dillon Galicia (L) and Max Mathena (R) were up for the challenge!



CONGRATULATIONS, LUKE BUTTERFIELD!

Luke (back row center) recently signed his letter of intent to play baseball for the College of Idaho. A few of his Utmost coaches and teammates helped him celebrate this exciting event. Luke has been at Utmost since 2019 and we wish him well as he begins this new chapter!



Go Yotes!