

THE COLUMBIA FUTURE FORGE

LIFE READY. JOB READY.

DECEMBER 2022

'TIS THE SEASON FOR JOY AND CELEBRATION AT THE FORGE



A few of our student Mowtown employees on the job on a recent Saturday. Luis, KJ, Alex and Matt worked together to care for the Columbia Presbyterian Church property and two other homes in the neighborhood. In 2022, Mowtown employed 10 teens. In 2023 we will continue to create opportunities for young adults to gain work experience!



From left:
Cornelio de Jesus Victoriano,
Luis Castillo, and
Santiago de Jesus Victoriano

Cornelio, Luis and Santiago are the heart of our regular Mowtown operations. Each week they skillfully serve a full list of residential properties that they maintain throughout the year. Luis helps keep our equipment in working order and meets with clients to discuss their property needs. On the weekends, they tackle one-time projects for other clients in the community. They are hardworking and dependable, and we are so grateful for them!



Hayes Freedom High School teacher Kelly Johnson, from left, and Forge mentors Julie Mauer, Matt Overton and Chris Burns work together to teach character development and life skills to 20 freshmen on "Mentor Mondays." They are completing their second fall semester at Hayes and are thankful for this ongoing partnership.



Utmost Athletics Coaches, from left, Taylor Eckel, Liam Fitzpatrick, Jun Jeong, Hector Infante and Chris Keinath bring expertise, enthusiasm, laughter and care to the weight room as people of all ages come together to build strength and flexibility. This fantastic team of coaches faithfully works with about 100 athletes from ages 13 to 80 each week.

Merry Christmas from the Columbia Future Forge Board of Directors. We oversee and support all various branches and initiatives of the Forge. Together we plan and dream about equipping young adults from all corners of our community to be "Life Ready, Job Ready." We send warm holiday greetings to each of you and thank you for your faithful support of the Forge in 2022.

From left: Marc Hartquist, Ted Buck, Bruce Farnsworth, Warren Schuh, Matt Overton, Bryan Ableidinger, and Julie Mauer (not pictured: Jan Ferguson).



MAYA'S UTMOST STORY

For college student Maya Dietrich of Vancouver, Utmost Athletics is more than a gym where she gets a good workout three times a week. It's also about connection and community.

"It's kind of a break from reality because I don't really stress about anything here. I take my stress out," she said. "Everyone is friendly, and it's a really good community. It's the only place I feel comfortable working out. Nobody really judges you."

With her sights set on a career in the medical field, Maya, 19, has a busy schedule studying neuroscience as a sophomore at Washington State University Vancouver. She started coming to Utmost two years ago at the urging of her boyfriend, Caden McCray, who has been working out there since the program's beginning.

She gradually got into a rhythm of building strength through a cycle of weight-lifting exercises. And early on, she discovered there is more to the program than getting stronger physically.

"People are encouraging," Maya said. "The coaches are really in tune with what's going on in your personal life. They don't push, they just check in, like 'How are you doing? How's school?' I'm not coming here just to work out, but to have a connection."

One way that Maya felt that connection was after her 17-year-old cousin was seriously injured in a car crash and spent three months at Randall Children's Hospital in Portland. While Maya watched her cousin make steady progress, she appreciated the concern that Utmost Athletics program director Jun Jeong and other coaches showed her.

"They can tell when something is wrong. One day Jun came up and asked how I was doing and if I was OK," she said.

"And assistant coach Liam Fitzpatrick — we talk about organic chemistry. Caden doesn't know the struggle of it, so Liam and I talk about it. ... It's nice to talk to people you don't normally surround yourself with, and they actually want to talk and listen."

As a full-time student responsible for tuition, books, parking and other college expenses, Maya said she would not be able to attend Utmost without a donor-funded scholarship, for which she is grateful.

"Utmost is one in a million," she said. "I don't think you can find a lot of gyms like this."

Another Utmost connection Maya made might even help her discover a specific career path. At the fall Utmost dinner, she met volunteer coach Taylor Eckel.

"At the dinner, I learned she was a physical therapist, so I thought, I should reach out to her," Maya said.

She plans to shadow Eckel at work to get an idea of what physical therapy is all about. She's also considering medical school.

Right now, though, Maya is looking forward to Max Week, when Utmost athletes aim to meet their personal weight-lifting records, loudly cheered on by their peers and coaches. Her Utmost highlight was weightlifting 90 kilograms — that's 198 pounds — in November.

"I dead-lifted it," she said. "I'm proud of that!"

Utmost Athletics is able to provide athletes with partial scholarships because of the generosity of our community. If you would like to contribute to the scholarship fund, you can click below to give a one-time gift or set up a monthly donation that goes specifically to support our scholarship program.

[CLICK HERE TO GIVE](#)



This interview was written by Bob Sisson. Bob is a retired reporter and copy editor for The Columbian. He now enjoys spending time with family, bicycling, traveling, and supporting the Forge. We hope to feature more articles from Bob in the future!