

FROM FORGE STUDENT TO MOWTOWN TO BOARD MEMBER

Luis Avila remembers being a young boy and tagging along with his father on landscaping jobs. During those times of mowing straight lines in lawns, trimming bushes and spreading mulch, Eduardo Avila began instilling responsibility and dedication in his son. "He really taught me his work ethic and wanted me to have it for myself," Luis, now 18, said. That influence and a vision for his future have propelled Luis to land jobs and to become the youngest and newest member of the Columbia Future Forge Board of Directors. "Luis is phenomenal. He's one of the most mature kids I've worked with," said Matt Overton, founding director of The Forge.

A 2023 graduate of Mountain View High School, Luis started with Columbia Future Forge in the winter of 2020, learning money management, goal-setting, professionalism, and figuring out what he's good at as part of the program's life-skills training. He eventually went into an entry-level job with the Forge's Mowtown Teen Lawn Care — what he calls "mowing and blowing" the church grounds, as well as people's yards. He began with the program earlier than most teens, but Overton saw potential in Avila.

"Luis is worth investing in. That's the key to the Forge," Overton said. "We're trying to find the right kids who we can leverage an impact on ... giving them the chance to imagine and try experiences on for size, and see what's possible and in good alignment with who they are."

Today, Luis is a Mowtown crew leader, directing and supervising two or three other teens as they keep the landscaped grounds around Columbia Presbyterian Church looking nice. Also, "I've started working on bids, such as measuring, figuring how much mulch is needed, and contacting people to get it," he said. "Sometimes I fix machines. I like opening them up and seeing what I can figure out."

Last summer, after his junior year at Mountain View High School, Luis was chosen to be intern for Skanska, the multinational construction company that built the new school campus. He worked on the company's final punch list, going around the building to document what still needed to be done, contacting the subcontractors and scheduling the work. Although Luis had thought of going into mechanical engineering for a career, the Skanska internship opened his eyes to other possibilities. "I think this experience helped me look into the trades and value that," he said. "And to be honest, I enjoy that work." He now wants to be an electrician. He has applied to the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 48 for an apprenticeship and has an aptitude test scheduled.

Luis was appointed to the Future Forge Board earlier this year. Board member Julie Mauer said he's learning to find his voice with the group, whose members have years of experience in various professions and trades. "He has contributed to donor outreach and has suggested modifications to the Forge training programs," she added. Luis said he values learning about how Future Forge works. As a board member, he sees spreadsheets about costs and expenditures, and what it takes to run a business. "I think I have an interest in someday having my own company," Luis said. Overton has no doubts that Luis will reach his goals: "I think Luis is capable of doing anything he wants to do. Not only is he capable, he is motivated."



HFHS YEARBOOK DEBUT

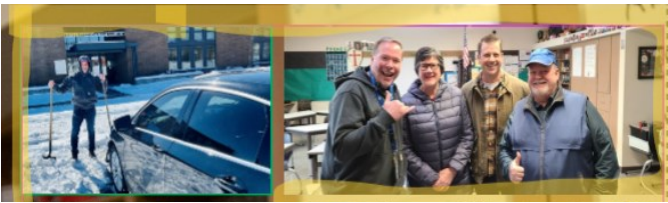


Kelly Johnson, Hayes Freedom High School teacher, recently phoned Matt and asked him to stop by the school because he had a gift for him.

When Matt arrived, Kelly presented him with Hayes Freedom yearbooks for each of the mentors that

worked closely with Kelly and his freshmen students during the fall semester. Matt was honored to accept them and was even more elated when Kelly opened the yearbook to his classroom photo page where Matt, Julie Mauer and Chris Burns were featured (a few shown below)!

We are looking forward to returning to HFHS this fall for our third year of partnering with Kelly and his incoming freshman students.



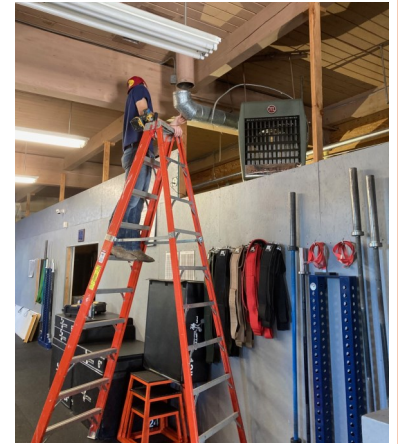
KEEPING COOL AT UTMOST

Utmost Athletics workout sessions are much cooler heading into these warm summer months thanks to the new HVAC system! After four summers of spinning fan blades at top speed, early workout hours, and many sweat towels, our coaches and athletes are ecstatic to have refreshingly cool air in the gym.

We partnered with Columbia Presbyterian Church to finance this important facility improvement. Blairco technicians were able to install the system during Utmost's non-operating hours with no disruption to workouts.

The HVAC system provides a more comfortable workout environment and enables a wider range of workout times for the athletes.

Last summer we had four training groups and this year we have expanded to five, spanning a wide range of ages. It is exciting to see Utmost grow and we are glad to offer a cool and welcoming weight room for all of our athletes.



"Life Ready. Job Ready."

We love to serve people in our community who have yard needs but aren't able to pay in full. These jobs offer a great way to train our young employees. Mowtown has a support fund to help offset the cost of these projects.

Capital improvements, such as the new HVAC system and landscape equipment, help to keep our business running smoothly and efficiently.

To support either of these funds, please note "Mowtown Caring Projects" or "Equipment" in the memo. Thanks!

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FORGE BOARD ANNOUNCEMENT

Congratulations to the Forge's Executive Director, Rev. Matt Overton, who recently became the new Lead Pastor of Columbia Presbyterian Church (CPC). Matt's new role at CPC means he will no longer be able to serve as the Executive Director of the Forge, so the Board is now making plans regarding Forge staffing and programming. While these discussions are ongoing and various options are being considered, here are a few things we know thus far:

- Matt will remain on the Forge Board of Directors with the new title of Founding Director and Head of Strategy.
- The Board will be looking for a new part-time Executive Director to help fill some of the roles previously held by Matt.
- Mentoring young adults will continue to take place at Mowtown, Utmost, Hayes Freedom High School, and in our community.