



Henry Meece

Gold Medal Snowboarder Gets Fulcrum Cup for One-Year on the Job

By Paul Haeder, Employment Specialist

Active. Involved. Busy. Everywhere. Did I say Busy?

"He's got a 'cool factor' about him," says Fulcrum Fitness manager David Levy, when asked about Henry Meece, UCP customer and one year employee.

Two words that encompass his character? "Energetic and adventurous," says employment specialist Ursula Morton, who has worked with UCP customer Henry Meece for years. "Henry is always involved in something really interesting and exciting such as snowboarding in Korea, dragon boat racing, jam skating, or riding bikes on ramps at the Junk Yard."

Henry is the janitor at Fulcrum Fitness Tuesdays through Fridays, and on Sunday. Al Hardaway works as Henry's UCP job coach, pointing out that "I am not his cue." Al finds Henry works best when things are fresh in his mind. I saw Al's easygoing relationship with Henry as a team-building attribute.

It worked out serendipitously for both Henry and Fulcrum that Brandon Guild has been there as a Fulcrum personal trainer and positive support for Brandon when needed. Brandon has worked as a power lifting coach for Multnomah County's Special Olympics for five years. "I understand how Henry operates," said Brandon. Brandon's worked with many athletes with autism and understands navigating the dynamic communication skills necessary when communicating with all sorts of folks.

Henry also works at the Oregon Public House, a place Ursula says was great for Henry, but he wanted more hours. Well, Claire Prichard, UCP employment specialist, helped Henry get an internship at a bike shop, Community Cycling Center. We all are hoping it turns into an ongoing job.

Connections and relationships are two powerful tools and concepts for us at Employment Solutions. Henry ramifies these two values to get people worthy jobs. "He is very involved in his community in his neighborhood," says Ursula. "Everywhere we would go during his job search, people would seem to know him. At Starbucks near his house, they have an article of him lighting the torch at the Olympics and winning the gold medal in Korea posted on their bulletin board."

How cool is that? Special Olympics World Winter Games in Pyeongchang, South Korea. That was in 2013, and in a big sense that trip was a homecoming. Henry was adopted by his Portland, Oregon, parents



Henry with his Job Developer Ursula Morton

when he was six months old. He's 25 now, and talks about how exciting Korea was and how the press were like paparazzi wanting every comment from Henry possible.

He started snowboarding on his high school team when he was 19, and from that point on he wanted to get a gold.

Stalls . . . slides . . . inverted rotations. These are the tools of the snowboarder, and Henry got that gold medal but didn't reunite with his birth parents. He told me he'd like to go back to Korea, and then queried me about all sorts of things. "Have you been to Korea? Do you like kimchi? Does scuba diving take much training? What did you like about Vietnam?"

He told me Korean was always hard for him, but that he studied at the local Starbucks with some language instructors. The 25-year-old Laurelhurst resident knows some of those necessary words to survive in Korea as a star, really: *yu bo se yo*, hello . . . *an nyung hi ga se yo*, goodbye . . . *jeonun miguk saram imnida*, I am an American.

"We are so glad to have Henry here," David Levy said. "It's a win-win situation for both of us. It's really great to see how much passion for the work he has. He really has a great sense of purpose."

The long haul is what Fulcrum Fitness has dedicated themselves to when it comes to Henry Meece. He works with job coaches like Al and Ursula, and he has a boss who isn't corporate and is "more forgiving." Redirecting, retraining and getting Henry on task is well worth the effort, Levy told me. "His smile is amazing and genuine. He's very soft spoken and very endearing. He's a special kid and has a positive,

hopeful outlook on life." We at UCP call that "value added," what all our customers bring to the job!



Henry and his Job Coach Al Hardaway

While Henry and I swapped kimchi stories (my father had been in Korea five years) and joked around about "duckfoot" or "fakie" stances, it was clear to me that UCP keeps those relationships bonded – between customer (employee) and our advocates (employer).

"Fulcrum has been such a great fit for Henry because it is sports related and he gets to be in charge and come in and clean the gym independently on some evenings," Ursula Morton says.

"They are very community oriented and have been really supportive of Henry. They are patient in giving

him time to learn new tasks and have a great match with UCP's mission."

Ahh – patience, supportive, mission-oriented. Now all Fulcrum Fitness has to do is have a Kimchi Night. That would really make Henry's day.

"Do they really keep kimchi underground for a year?" Henry asked while I was there getting his story. I smiled and told him it tasted better with age.