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Hello, Neighbor: Mason Young

[July 8, 2025](#)
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Hello, Neighbor: The People Who Shape West St. Paul is a collaboration between [member-supported](#) West St. Paul Reader and [Community Blueprint](#), a local content creation studio focused on telling stories that make change.

Mason Young, a West St. Paul local who attended Heritage E-STEM Middle School as a student, now works at the school and gives back to students in the same way his teachers and coaches once did for him.

Watch the [video interview](#) with Mason Young:

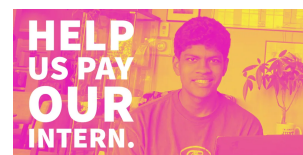


Power Hour

Young created Power Hour, a program for students to come in and workout together for an hour before school.

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According to Young, each day follows a similar routine. First the students arrive, change clothes, take attendance and warm up. After, they play games in the gym, or do speed work and foot work. Last, they head into the weight room where students “learn the basics of weightlifting.”

The program started a few years ago, with Young’s idea stemming from his own time working out before school when he attended Two Rivers High School. It began with a small group of kids that showed up every morning, “but then it grew to about 60 kids coming at 7:00 a.m. every morning, and then we just got a grant and started growing from there,” Young said.

Young says giving students the chance to get their energy out before school has a huge impact on students’ attendance and attitude throughout the day. “It changes their day completely,” he said.

Building Lifelong Skills

But Power Hour has a more long-term impact on students too, and the program helps kids build skills they’ll use for the rest of their lives.

While Young oversees the program, he also encourages students to lead themselves and vote on decisions instead of having him decide for them.

“I saw at the start, a lot of times they would look to me and be like, ‘Well, figure it out. Tell us what to do’” Young said. “Well, no. When you’re in the real world, you’re going to have to work with someone that might be angry or amped up or doesn’t care, and you’ve got to figure out a way to make it work.”

According to Young, practicing these skills helps students learn to work as a team, which helps them in their sports. Young loves to hear that his students are doing well in their sports, and that the work is paying off.

“What I really want to teach them is to be able to do things on their own without me being there, without adults needing to be there,” Young said.

The program also gives students of all different backgrounds a new opportunity to make friends. “Everybody in the group knows that everybody’s equal, and we pull each other around and we also hold each other to a higher standard than I think some would in the classroom.”

Coming Full Circle in West St. Paul

Young was a student at Heritage and Two Rivers, and a member of the wrestling team. He recalls how sports played a role in keeping him in school, and uses his own experience to help current students.

“It’s really fun to come back and help my own community,” he said. “Seeing a lot of these kids go through the same things that I was going through and being able to help them has really been the biggest piece.”

Young credits Prentice Smith, the activities director at Two Rivers, for supporting him during his schooling, and hopes to be that support person for other kids. He tries to find and help students who he says, “if they weren’t here or if they weren’t in sports, they might go down a different path.”

Additionally, Power Hour can lead students to start playing sports, which gives them another reason to remain part of the program and stay in school. “The more connections you have, the better you do in school,” Young said.

“I think a lot of students when they start out, they’re a little wary with, ‘Well, I don’t want to try’ because in gym [class] it’s a different atmosphere, but I believe with Power Hour, they start trying things and once they start getting confidence, it throws them into another sport. Like, ‘Oh, I actually like soccer. I’m going to try soccer.’”

As the At Promise Coordinator, Young works with students who are having tough days and need additional support. “At Heritage, I am the discipline guy. It’s a tough road sometimes because kids don’t get to see me in that light. And then when I get kids that have been having a tough time, then they see me here [Power Hour] and I’m completely different,” Young said.

Looking Ahead

As the program grew, Young applied for grant money from the [ISD 197 Educational Foundation](#). The grant provided new weightlifting equipment such as dumbbells and medicine balls, sports equipment such as footballs and belts for flag football, as well as things like T-shirts for the kids and a microphone and speaker.

Young expressed his gratitude for all the ways the funding has improved the program for the students. Without the grant, “we wouldn’t have had the bar tree. We used to have the bars laying all over the place. It really cleaned up the room, helped us with space,” Young said.

He hopes the program can continue to expand with the help of funding, perhaps one day providing transportation for students who don’t have rides.

Young recalls during his time on the Two Rivers wrestling team, other students changed schools to make other teams, but he wanted to prove that you can stay in West St. Paul and be successful.

“I know a lot of people that did the same thing. We all stayed and made it work. And now I think our community is getting to that point where we are growing as a community. We have great facilities,” Young said. “I couldn’t see why anyone would want to leave or change districts. It’s crazy to me when you’ve got all these coaches that are willing to help them out and teachers that are willing to do it.”

Young’s message to students and families is this: “The bigger the program, the better our school will be and the happier kids there are. So if anyone else is open to showing up, I’ll definitely take them and we’ll make it work.”

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One comment



Joe Guscetti says:
[July 11, 2025 at 6:43 pm](#)

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Just received the story about Mason Young. We’ve had the opportunity to see Mason’s ability to work with kids both in Power Hour and Two Rivers High School Wrestling. Our Grandsons are all in wrestling and we see the maturity and positive improvements the 3 have as they advance into wrestling in there years with Mason

Joe&Mary Guscetti
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