



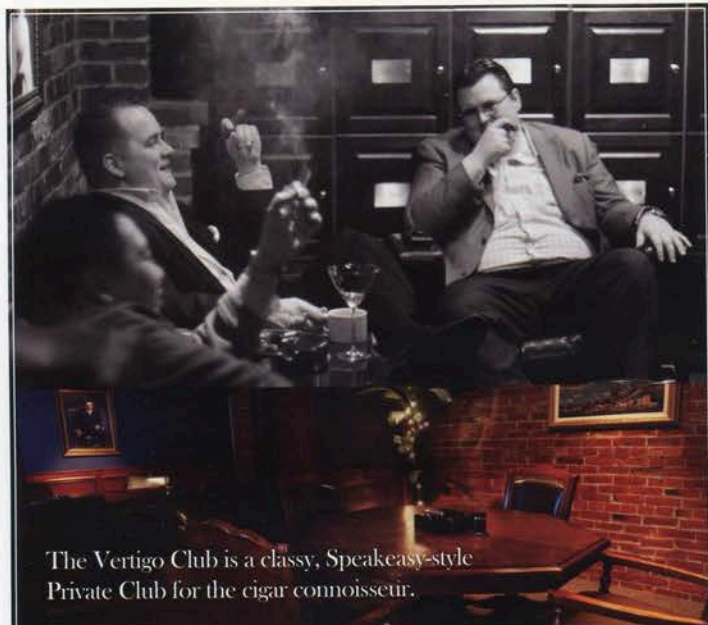
Class of 2017 Senior Sendoff



Left to right, Michael Taylor, Euan Dumont, Willem Debray and Matt Padgett at the Earth Corps work party at Pioneer Park.

# Mercer Island Chapter of *The National League of Young Men*

by Priscilla Padgett



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The Mercer Island Chapter of the National League of Young Men (NLYM), a non-profit organization for mothers and sons, has come a long way in their three short years on the island. They have grown to support a chapter of 114 young men and 99 mothers, 4 full classes from grades 9-12, and will see the graduation of their first class of seniors in June. Through a structured 4-year curriculum NLYM promotes the development of young men into community leaders with charitable and community service, cultural experiences, protocol education and leadership involvement.

“Our chapter will surpass the 5,000 service hour mark this year. It is an amazing feat and I’m really proud of the efforts from all the young men,” stated President Diane Salisbury. Some highlights of this year include the screening and discussion of *The Hunting Ground*, a mother/son event that opened up the conversation about sexual assault, as well as the Dale Carnegie workshop which provided information on how to improve communication skills.

“To be truly hands-on serving a community and to experience the impact of your hard work is incredibly satisfying and gratifying,” affirmed senior Willem Debray. “While in NLYM I have volunteered with the Mercer Island Farmers Market, cleaned parks and removed invasive species with Earth Corps, and helped with the setup and breakdown of the Mercer Island Half Marathon. The most rewarding philanthropy event I have participated in is the Tijuana House Building trip through the Mercer Island Presbyterian Church. For the past three Spring Breaks, I have traveled to Mexico to build a small home for a deserving family. The feeling of presenting the family with a new home is unmatched,” asserted Debray. His college plans include attending Washington State University where he will study health, medicine and biology, with hopes of being a firefighter or paramedic.

Fellow Senior Ryan Van der Hoeven remembers being the speaker chair during his sophomore year, a position that saw him having to find, communicate with, introduce and thank speakers. Van der Hoeven said, "The speaker who had the biggest impact on me was a S.W.A.T. officer. He spoke to us about being leaders in our community and gave us each a book, *Integrity*, by Stephen Carter. I read the book and it really made me think about how I conduct myself and make decisions." Ryan enjoyed visiting the Museum of Flight, participating in the Dale Carnegie training on developing interpersonal skills, and watching and discussing *The Hunting Ground* with his Mom and peers. Van der Hoeven plans on going to the University of Washington where he will be a part of the Honors program and Department of Materials Science and Engineering.

Of the 23 seniors, most plan on attending college next year, at schools such as UW, WSU, USC, CalPoly, Oregon State University, Dartmouth and McGill to name a few. Salisbury noted of the seniors, "I have watched these young men gain confidence in their leadership skills, speaking abilities, interaction with peers and more. The senior sendoff event showed how far these young men have grown and it is really rewarding to know that this program helped contribute to their launch into the next phase of their lives."

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