

I consider myself in a group of lucky people that can honestly say that they love their job. As coordinator for the Climbing Wall, what is there not to love about the job I get to do? From the ever changing routes, to the challenge of a new move, to the individuals that I get to meet, every day on the wall is a unique adventure. When I took over this position two short years ago the wall seemed to be an after-thought for drop-in swimmers or was reserved for the most polished climbers. Fast forward to now; we are able to offer sixteen classes, two yearly competitions, and the demographic of an everyday climber has completely changed. Now wall patrons include first time climbers that have been waiting a month to weigh 35lbs, young couples enjoying a date night, our 65+ G.O.A.T. morning climbers, and everyone in between.

As much as I have loved to watch the evolution of the not only the climbing wall itself, but also the diversity of climbers, there is another aspect of my position that makes it amazing; the climbing staff. The seven Climbing Wall Attendants are one of the most outstanding groups of people I have met. Everyone brings their own strengths forward which has awarded me with an exceptional team. While each attendant contributes something invaluable to the table, there are two that have been on my mind a little extra this spring.

I am so proud to say that the climbing wall has TWO graduates this year! Eric, the expert climber that has been working on the wall longer than I have and Cade, the spunky beam of energy. These two are among many teens from our community that will not be experiencing the typical graduation they had planned at the start of the school year. I have gotten used to saying goodbye to my high school staff as they leave the nest and embark on the real world, yet this year seems different. The difference could be because Eric has been my constant and reliable rock the last two years or because Cade's bright personality cannot go unnoticed. Whatever it is – I am not ready to say goodbye! It weighs heavily on me that these two, and countless other graduates have been so effected by this pandemic, but I want to use this opportunity to say to everyone in the class of 2020, YOU DID IT! While the world has seemed to stop this last month, none of you have and that should be celebrated! To *my* climbing graduates and the entire graduating class of 2020, you should be so proud of what you have already achieved and of what accomplishments all of your futures hold. I hope that all of you remember the struggles that you went through to get here and never forgot those special individuals missing from your graduating class. As each of you begin climbing the mountain of life remember, be kind, be strong, and be incredible!