



## Welcome to the 2024 Climb Newsletter.

The Newsletter highlights the stories of students, coaches, and Climb instructors and staff that are reaching for the highest levels of excellence in speech and debate.

**Click on individual stories to read about Climb the Mountain!**

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### We had a great year!

Enjoy and please feel free to contact me, Jim Hanson at [jim@climbthemountain.us](mailto:jim@climbthemountain.us) with questions, ideas, edits, omissions, thoughts, etc.

Thank you to Emily Cordo, article writer, and to Solika Proctor, Newsletter design layout, for helping to complete this Newsletter.

## Climb Stories



### Eliza McConaghy

During one of the after school online speech classes, one of the younger students was struggling with a technology issue within PowerPoint. Another student, a few years older, very patiently walked him through how to fix it. I think one of the most impactful parts of Climb is how the students learn from each other. As a teacher/coach, it makes me really happy when the students feel empowered to become teachers themselves.

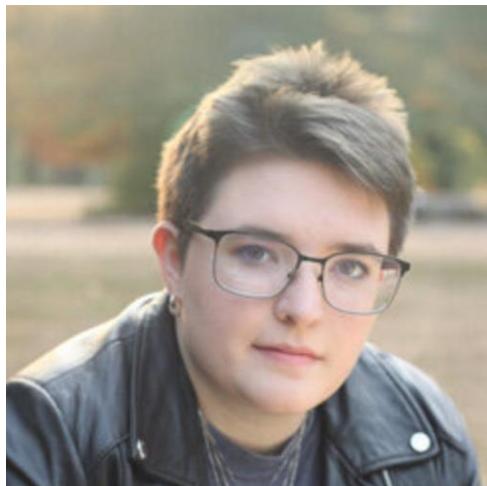
Another moment from the spring session that sticks out to me is when another student was having a hard time. I

asked the group to pause and to do some meditation exercises. The other students in the lab immediately stopped what they were doing and joined us. I have hope for the future because I saw so much kindness and inspiration.

### Jason Sandford

Complex and serious topics in Lincoln-Douglas debate can be very challenging, especially when students get assigned one side of the topic to argue. I had the pleasure of watching two students engage in an intellectual battle of titans. It was non-stop argument, analysis, and evidence. From the beginning to the end, both students fought like King Kong vs Godzilla. The depth of argument and interaction was a joy to judge. My decision was extremely difficult and came down to the final two speeches. I asked them before the debate to remember that they are either President now or about to be President with a victory in this debate. They both proved worthy of such a title. The argument that won the debate for the victor was both complex and powerful, and represented a call for justice and equality. President Lincoln would have been proud!





## Pepper Berry

One student wrote a speech about their 3D printer and I encouraged them to expand on it with more personal details. They ended up sharing that they sell their 3D-printed creations at vendor fairs to earn money! It was exciting to hear how they turned a hobby into a small business. I loved learning about their process especially since I've worked with 3D printers myself. Their confidence and entrepreneurial spirit really lit up the room.

## Tyler Zabolio

One class I worked with started off with half of the kids accidentally prepping for the wrong topic! They all had 25 minutes before the impromptu debate to develop their arguments with their team. Both teams usually would of course be preparing for the same topic on different sides but in this case they were talking about totally different things. This problem became apparent when the first pro speech was talking about nuclear energy and the first con speech was talking about wearing uniforms in school!



While this was a funny moment it also could have reasonably been stressful for the kids considering that we had to restart prep time for the debate and only give them 10 minutes so we could get the round done in time. Instead of complaining, the kids got straight to work and were extremely efficient! This ended up being one of the best rounds I judged that day!



## Trinity Doyle

In classes with younger students, you sometimes will get a student who isn't very interested in the material, often because of a lack of confidence. This session I had an elementary debate class with one such student. He struggled to pay attention and stay on task, and would often cut his speeches short or ask to go first just to say he hadn't completed his speech and he'd like to be skipped. He was genuinely a good speaker, but he needed encouragement, and that's what I and the other instructor offered. After walking him through writing portions of his speech when he

struggled and encouraging him to use the rest of the time when he cut himself short, by the last session he did amazing! From not speaking to giving compelling and full speeches without any hand-holding, this improvement was not only incredible to see, but inspiring. As an instructor, this was the exact change that you hope to see in new speakers who are struggling and I look forward to seeing these happy stories more as I work with Climb!

## Kaitlin Medina

When I have a little bit of time at the end of sessions, I like to play This or That with my students, which is a fun game where I ask students to go to either side of the room corresponding with which side they like better. I ask "hamburgers or hotdogs" and point to which side of the room they should go for which one they like better. I always have them give me a reason, practicing a contention in a fun way. This is always a fun way to get to know the kids better, and for them to get to know their classmates better too. Some students are especially opinionated and it's fun to see that side of them!



## Climb Takes Different Paths Over the Mountain



The peak-Covid era shift to remote classes affected debate just like most other activities. Debaters, judges, and coaches had to learn how to debate on-screen, without a competitor or judge in the room. While this adaptation was important to keep the activity alive and ensure kids didn't miss out on the opportunity for debate during those years, the tide turned quite a bit after the lock downs ended. As debaters, like most other people, increasingly felt burned out from spending time on Zoom, they wanted the live feel—meeting other students in person.

Climb pivoted, responding to this growing demand for more in-person debate opportunities by shifting to on-site locations. Of course, there were upsides and downsides to this transition. One major downside was the increased burden on parents to provide transportation to get their kids to in-person debate events. The need for transportation created a barrier to participation for students whose parents couldn't drive them often due to work obligations.

In response, Climb pivoted once again. We approached and were approached by Parent-Teacher associations in schools around the region. These PTAs wanted to create after school programs, so that students could participate in speech and debate without needing extra transportation from their parents. This has worked well, but it too comes with challenges. The biggest challenge has been finding enough instructors who are available in the earlier afternoon to work with students. Jim has managed to cobble together just enough instructions and these at-school programs have been a big hit. Climb transitioned to about 40% of Climb students participating in programs at their own schools in 2024.

Climb continues to offer online instruction in addition to the locations we've set up as well as the at-school locations. These efforts are keeping us solidly enrolled and fulfilling our mission of providing individualized instruction to debate students in ways that meet their individual needs. Covid was a major obstacle, but climbing over big obstacles is what Climb the Mountain is all about, and we'll continue to adapt and adjust to meet the needs of students (and their parents) who want to get involved in speech and debate.

## Bonus Class Increases Climb Student Success

Winning isn't everything, but for most debaters the activity is competitive—they want to win. Jim wants our Climb teams to win. Our debaters from all over the Puget Sound area are up against some of the most gifted kids often from high end private schools. The Puget Sound region has a lot of great debaters including some very smart and hardworking kids. Trying to win debates against these students can really feel like an uphill climb.

Initially, the Climb debaters held their own but as our programs expanded, Jim noticed the teams were doing less well than he wanted. We weren't doing terribly—just not as well as we should have been doing. So, Jim came up with a plan.

Jim added an extra class at the end of our programs each quarter. In this bonus class, students specifically prepare for the speech and debate tournament at Seattle University. This includes practicing their case, bolstering their planned refutation and arguments, practicing questions and answers, defending arguments, and weighing arguments. We do this in the regular program but even more so at the end. It really helps when our instructors are giving strategic tips. The class also goes over tournament logistics in advance so students aren't confused when they get to the tournament. The logistical preparation includes things like learning how round postings work and other basics that can seem bewildering to a debater who is new to the activity. At the extra class, students also get to work collaboratively with their tournament teammates. They work to build a cohesive set of cases and responses. They practice their speeches. All of this builds teamwork skills and helps debaters bond with and support each other.

The extra day of class has made a major difference. Students are achieving more competitive success, often rising from being a confused novice to a confident speaker and debater at the Seattle U event. We've recently won several top 5 school awards, we are now winning multiple awards in each division at each tournament, and we are even breaking out from the pack with wins over well-prepared and supported debaters from bigger, premiere programs.



## Climb Highlights Sept. 2023-Dec. 2024

Over the past year and a quarter, we instructed more than 1,100 students in debate and public speaking through our afterschool and camp programs.

- **Jared Phillips, our Chief Executive Officer**, continued to provide financial leadership for Climb and managed accounting for all organizational activities.
- **Jim** hosted the final Northwest Warmup and Climb tournaments, concluding a 32+ year tournament history.
- **Jim, as Seattle University Director**, hosted ten tournaments for grades 3-12, as well as a high school tournament at Seattle University, where Climb students earned dozens of individual and team awards.
- Responded to dozens of inquiries regarding speech and debate programs.
- Assisted coaches in hiring assistant coaches and judges for their programs.
- Implemented numerous updates and improvements to the Climb afterschool and camp programs, including website content and instructional PowerPoints.
- **Jim** directed and instructed multiple in-person programs.
- Hosted Climb speech and debate camps at Bellevue College and Seattle University in July and August 2024, with approximately 200 students and coaches participating.



**To get the latest news, be sure to check our Facebook page:**

[Climb the Mountain Speech and Debate Foundation | Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/climbthemountain)

## Donors Keep Us Climbing!

We are so grateful for the support of so many people. People have donated money. People have donated their time. People have reached out to others to bring them into the world of speech and debate. We thank everyone for their efforts including these donors below (donations from September 2023 to December 2024). ***Did we miss you? We are very sorry for the omission and we want to correct it! Please email Jim at [jim@climbthemountain.us](mailto:jim@climbthemountain.us) and tell him. :)***

### Donors

<b>Allan Louden</b> <b>American Online Giving Foundation</b> <b>Char Main Chris Dunlap</b> <b>Jared Phillips and Loan Lam</b> <b>Jason Smith</b> <b>Jim Hanson</b>	<b>Peter Stiffler</b> <b>Robert Withycombe</b> <b>Shari and David Barsky</b> <b>Teresa Badgley</b> <b>The UK Online Giving Foundation</b> <b>Yael Bridge</b> <b>Zach Maghirang</b>
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## Thank you to all that have worked with Climb!

We are so grateful for the instruction and guidance you have provided for our programs—for our kids. September 2023 through December 2024. ***Did we miss you? We are very sorry for the omission and we want to correct it! Please email Jim at [jim@climbthemountain.us](mailto:jim@climbthemountain.us) and tell him. : )***

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Adriana Amanti	Elle Roycroft	Peter Litster
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Clarence Guo	Lyd Cole	Zachary Maghirang
Corey Paulson	Lyd Haindfield	And to all of the people that
Denise Vaughan	Maya Garzelli	have helped grow our
Divya Somysetty	Miriam Hardyway	community!
Eduard Strok	Nico Roshau	

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