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FRIDAY JAN 29/10



I-405 | Work on improvements to Interstate 405 near Renton City Hall are six to nine months ahead of schedule [3]



Charged again | A former basketball coach has been charged with fraud. [3]

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Look up, look down. Gee, this is fun!

Lauren Herley's feet firmly planted in the air as she takes her circus skills to the Olympic opener in B.C.

BY ADAM MCFADDEN
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Dangling from a rope 30 feet in the air, with nothing below to help ease a fall. This is a nightmare for most people.

For Lauren Herley, it's a dream. In fact, it's up there that she really feels alive.

"I've always been a little crazy," Herley said. "I don't ever remember having a fear of heights. I love the adrenaline."

It's that craziness – and a lot of hard work – that has carried the 20-year-old former Lindbergh student to one of the world's highest stages.

Herley will perform with other members of the Ecole Nationale de Cirque (National Circus School) in the 2010 Winter Olympics Opening Ceremony Feb. 12 in Vancouver, British Columbia.

The school picked about 30 performers to try out for the opening ceremonies. After a brief audition, Herley was among the small group chosen to perform in Vancouver.

"It was an honor to be chosen by the school to audition," she said. "To get accepted by the Olympics was even nicer."

Herley works, learns and trains at the school eight to 12 hours a day. She trains in a number of aspects, but her specialty is ropes, contortions and acrobats. More specifically, the corde lisse.

In the corde lisse (French for smooth rope), a performer climbs, spins, poses and drops on a rope suspended from a height of 32 feet. The rope is



Lauren Herley poses while performing on the corde lisse. Herley specializes in the event, as well as in acrobatics. SETH GOLUB, Sethoscope.net

[more OLYMPICS page 16]

Uwajimaya, Go Deli, Armondo's team up in tasty business deal

BY DEAN A. RADFORD
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A unique partnership with the new Uwajimaya market in Renton is helping to expand the brand of two downtown businesses – Armondo's and Go Deli.

The deal also gives a lift to Uwajimaya, the Asian specialty grocery market at the Renton Village that is looking at new ways to attract customers to the store.

For the last several weeks, Armondo's and Go Deli have been supplying the deli at Uwajimaya's with prepackaged to-go sandwiches. Each supplier is still testing the market to figure out what works best for Uwajimaya's Asian and Western customers and also meets Uwajimaya's goals for its deli.

The partnership comes as Armondo's and Go Deli are feeling the pinch of the economic recession. More business – and exposure – is good.

[more DELI page 11]

Renton boy, 15, is charged in bus assault

BY DEAN A. RADFORD
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Two assault charges were filed Wednesday against a 15-year-old Renton boy in the attack early Saturday morning that left a Metro bus driver unconscious, according to the King County Prosecutor's Office.

The teen, a freshman at Renton High School, was charged with second-degree and third-degree assault.

"Any assault on a bus driver is a very serious matter," said King County Prosecutor Dan Satterberg. "In addition to the harm to the bus driver, the passengers, other motor-

[more TEEN page 4]



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Herley: 'I was an artist inside trying to find my way out'

[OLYMPICS from page 1]

not braided like typical rope. It's also more flexible than regular rope.

Success on the rope is part practice, part natural talent and part confidence. Hesitation or reluctance can be dangerous.

"I'm lucky I've never really injured myself," Herley said. "I never doubt myself when I'm up high. You just know what you're doing and do it."

Gymnastics just wasn't the right fit

Instead of the gym and mats, Herley's beginning training happened in the back yard and the living room. Being active was the only way she knew how to live.

"I loved to swim, run and I taught myself acrobatics," she said. "I thought I was normal until I went to high school and started competing."

Herley attended Lindbergh until her senior year, when she transferred to Issaquah High School. Her family still lives in Renton. Her brother Derek helped lead the Eagles football team to its most successful season ever in 2009.



Lauren Herley

While she was one of the best gymnasts on the high school team, it wasn't enough for her.

"I put all my heart and soul into gymnastics and it was really sad because I knew I couldn't go to the Olympics in gymnastics or be a Division I athlete."

Herley got several offers from Division III colleges, but she didn't want to settle for a smaller school.

Meanwhile, as hard as she tried in gymnastics, it still wasn't quite the right medium for her to express herself. It had too many guidelines, too little time and too much

restriction.

"It was really frustrating because there were so many rules and only 90 seconds for a routine," Herley said. "It doesn't give you any room. I was an artist inside trying to find my way out."

All of that changed with a simple suggestion. A woman approached Herley while she was practicing at Metropolitan Gymnastics in Kent and told her, "You're made for circus."

P.J. Chi is the boys program director and one of the team coaches at Metropolitan. Herley has been a big part of the gym since she started there at 14 and Chi knew right away she had the potential to be something special.

"She was very flexible, very strong and very determined," Chi said. "She played around with the circus program and fell in love with it."

The weight of performing

It's night as Herley sits in her room in Montreal, alone and crying. The realization hits home: This is really hard.

The emotional toll often goes unnoticed, but Herley said it's just as heavy as the physical burden of performing.

"Obviously it's physically tiring, but it's an art too, so it's very emotionally exhausting," she said. "You have to really not forget about your dream and not push yourself too hard."

Herley said the biggest challenge by far is her own mind. She can be too rough on herself, which breeds negativity about what she's doing.

Though the burden can be overwhelming at times, Herley's love for the art always seems to shine through.

As does her talent. After a performance in front of the entire Montreal school, the school's director heaped praise on Herley, saying she could be one of the best performers in the world one day.

"The biggest moments to me can be kind of small compared to what people think they might be," she said. "That is definitely one of the most



Lauren Herley worked in gymnastics for a number of years, but found it wasn't the right fit for her talents. SETH GOLUB, *Sethoscope.net*

memorable moments for me."

What's ahead

One day after graduating from high school, Herley told Chi about her dream when she was a little girl. "She said she wanted to run away and join the circus," Chi said. "I just think that's really funny, considering where she's at now."

Herley has trained at a number of centers, including Circus Center in San Francisco, Metropolitan Gymnastics in Kent and School of Acrobatics and New Circus Arts in Seattle, but the National Circus School in Montreal is her biggest step so far.

The school is a full-service educational environment. Along with schools in music, dance and theater, it offers academics at the secondary and college levels. It's also one of the world's best circus schools.

Herley will be in Montreal for about two and a half more years until she graduates.

"I have three rope acts that I do right now," she said. "Now that I'm at this school, it's all about creation. You get to create a new piece of art really. When I come out of the school, I will have really solid routines that I can market."

After school, she hopes to move on to Paris, where she can take her career to the next level.

"Once you go there you can't get much higher," she said. "You become the best in the world."

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EAGLES LOSE ANOTHER HEARTBREAKER

See full photo slideshow of Lindbergh's Jan. 20 game against Highline at pnw.cc/eaglesbb

SPARKS EXPLODES FOR 36, RENTON STILL FALLS TO LANCERS

Kelsey Sparks scored a season-high 36 points, but the Indians still lost 64-61 to Kennedy Catholic Jan. 22.

The Indians (8-5 overall, 6-4 Seamount) gave Kennedy its closest league game of the season. The Lancers had won league games by an average of 32.6 points.

After the outburst Sparks is averaging 16.3 points per game, which leads the team.

more story online... pnw.cc/sparks

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