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# Rockford teen earns every single Boy Scout merit badge



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 **Evan Leake**

FEATURED REPORTS, INSPIRING 815, NEWS, POSITIVE LOCAL NEWS

ROCKFORD (WREX) — It took some convincing from John Cabrera's parents to sell their son on joining the Boy Scouts.

He didn't think it would be that fun.

Now a 16-year-old, John doesn't use the word fun to describe the organization.

He opts for "incredible."

"It's a great character builder. It's something that's very important to me. Something that's changed me for the better," Cabrera said.

*"I couldn't imagine my life without scouting now."*

The passion Cabrera now has for the Boy Scouts has grown through every new experience.

Each one marked by a new merit badge on his sash.

John is able to pick out each and every one of them and instantly go back to the journey to earn it.



"Scuba diving was really incredible. I got to learn how to scuba dive and go scuba diving in the Florida Keys. It's a whole other world down there and it's very beautiful," Cabrera said.



However, the story isn't always a beautiful sight.

Sometimes the badge is earned through overcoming great obstacles.

"The hardest one was backpacking. That was something I did with my dad. We went back packing in the Grand Canyon," Cabrera said.



"We did over 50 miles. Weather got up 104 degrees. It was a lot of walking and really tiring and that was by far the hardest one."

Regardless of the difficulty, John made it through.

Every single time.

His perseverance now has him in a very exclusive group.

John has collected every single Boy Scout merit badge.

It's a feat less than 400 Boy Scouts have accomplished.

*"It feels great to be a part of such a small group of something in scouting. It adds to the feeling of I really accomplished something great," Cabrera said.*

To collect every merit badge takes a lot of time and even more effort.

Something that wasn't expected of young John when he first donned a Boy Scout uniform.

"He was so quiet. He never spoke up," Troop 14 Assistant Boy Scout Master Larry Swanson said.

"Opportunities is what the scout program is about. It's just saying 'okay, you go do it.' He's never said no or not me."

The yes mentality has helped mold the now Life Scout into a great young leader.

So much so he is now a den chief for a cub scout troop filled with kids even younger, and in some cases quieter, than he was when he started his Boy Scouts journey.

The quiet kid is long gone now as John helps the young cubs understand what it means to be a Boy Scout and be a positive impact in our community.

"I just love teaching these kids. When they see me they think wow that's something that's incredible and I hope I can do great things just like him," Cabrera said.

*"That makes me feel good inside that I have helped other kids want to do something great."*

Civility can come in all shapes, sizes and ages and we need your help to recognize it where it comes.

If you know anyone who is trying to improve our stateline home for the better, **you can fill out a nomination form here** or you can email [eleake@wrex.com](mailto:eleake@wrex.com).





**Evan Leake**

Evan Leake anchors for 13 News Today and 13 News at Noon. Evan grew up in Darien, Illinois, a south-west suburb of Chicago. He came to WREX in 2017 and worked his way to the anchor desk in May of 2019. He coordinates both the Teacher of the Week and Inspiring 815 series for 13 News. You can connect with Evan at [eleake@wrex.com](mailto:eleake@wrex.com) or Evan Leake on Facebook.

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