



SUPER SCOUT: Teen earns every badge BSA has to offer, so far



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You name it, Griffin Creekmore has probably done it.

The 17-year-old has earned every single merit badge Boy Scouts of America has to offer, and he's not done yet. The young man still has until Nov. 29, when he turns 18, before his journey ends.

It's been a journey filled with adventure, learning life skills and having experiences that many youths his age haven't. Creekmore has 135 colorful round patches to prove it.

"I just like doing my best at everything," said Creekmore, who participates in several school sports and on the chess team, performs well academically, plays the saxophone and piano, and is active in the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and at church.

His achievement is highly unusual. While scouting.org says some 2,209,000 young men have been named Eagle Scouts since 1911, the number earning all of the badges available to them is less than 200, according to meritbadgeknot.com, a site that celebrates that specific accomplishment by Boy Scouts.

Of those honored on meritbadgeknot.com, three are from Georgia and two are from South Carolina. Creekmore will likely join their ranks when he ages out in November.

Creekmore is a member of Troop 202 in Brunswick, Ga., which is part of the Okefenokee Area Council, but has been a guest of Indian Waters Council's Troop 428 at First Baptist Church of St. Matthews since transferring in fall 2011 to Calhoun Academy, where he plans to graduate in spring 2014.

While his parents, Lisa and Ken Creekmore, still live in Brunswick, where his Eagle Scout father serves as pastor of Glyndale Baptist Church, Griffin Creekmore stays during the school year with his grandparents, Kenneth and Verity Creekmore, in St. Matthews so

that he can attend the smaller school and have more opportunities to play football, basketball and baseball.

So how does one go about earning badges in everything from archaeology to bugling to emergency preparedness, fly-fishing, home repairs, kayaking, pottery, robotics and snow sports?

"I got most of mine for going to a bunch of summer camps," Creekmore said. "I go to three, four summer camps a year," paid for mostly through funds he raises during the Boy Scouts' annual popcorn sales.

"That's how I made most of my money to go. My parents didn't have to pay for all of it," he said.

Creekmore has been to camps all over the Southeast, including those in Florida, Georgia, North and South Carolina and other states.

The young man didn't grow up in Scouts, and just became interested in the organization that "builds character, trains (young men) in the responsibilities of participating citizenship, and develops personal fitness" — according to the mission statement on the BSA website — nearly six years ago. His brother, 20-year-old Kenlee, is also an Eagle Scout.

"When I started out, I didn't have that many (badges), and I saw my dad had, like, 39, and I wanted to get how many he had," Creekmore said. "And then, from there, I was like, 'Well, I might as well get them all.'"

Only 21 merit badges are required to earn Eagle Scout status. Creekmore earned that status in spring 2011, when he was 15 years old, by coordinating and overseeing new landscaping at Glyndale Baptist Church.

Four badges Creekmore earned during the Scouts' 100th anniversary could only be earned in 2010: carpentry, tracking, pathfinding and signaling.

Among his favorites is the scuba diving badge he earned at Camp La-No-Che in Florida. His least favorite is probably also the one he worked hardest to get, cycling.

"I cycled 150 miles in one week," Creekmore said. That one was also earned in Florida.

To earn his backpacking badge, he and a friend set out on the Appalachian Trail during spring break in 2012. "That was pretty cool," Creekmore said of the trip that also earned him the BSA's 50-Miler Award.

Other achievements during his six years of Scouting include a God and Church emblem and various medals and awards, including the National Certificate of Merit, "awarded to a youth member or adult leader who has performed a significant act of service that is deserving of special national recognition," according to the BSA.

"We were at Camp Rainey Mountain in Georgia, and we all took a hike to Big Rock ... and this kid fell and broke his leg," Creekmore said. "Me, three other kids and an adult carried him back down the mountain."

Each badge brings back a memory for Creekmore, such as the nervousness he felt earning the climbing one.

“It was at Georgia Southern (University), and I remember we had to rappel, and we rappelled off a 100-foot tower,” he said. “You just have to pretty much free-fall down, and grab yourself and go down, and a lot of people didn’t get the merit badge because you had to do it three times. They chickened out — they wouldn’t do it.

“My legs were trembling. I was like, ‘Whoa,’ but after I did it, it was fun. But I was scared the first time.”

Or the time he was working toward his small-boat sailing badge, and the wind wouldn’t cooperate. When a motorboat came to pick them up, the gas ran out.

“We were down the river a couple of miles,” Creekmore said. “We held onto a dock. My arms hurt so bad.”

While earning his whitewater badge on a multi-river trek with other Scouts at Camp Rainey Mountain, Creekmore got sick with a 100-plus fever but stayed on anyway. He earned both the badge and the paddle from the trip.

Creekmore said he is terrible at welding, according to an acquaintance who’s a welder, and knows that he doesn’t want to be an engineer, based on his experience earning the engineering badge.

However, in all of his experiences, Creekmore has found a career calling: dentistry. Yes, there’s a badge for that.

The 135 badges — and several palms, the only official designation given by BSA for receiving badges beyond those for Eagle Scout — are displayed on Creekmore’s sash, which is actually two standard sashes sewn together. He helped his grandmother, Verity Creekmore, with the undertaking, earning the textiles badge in the process. For the most part, the 135 badges are in alphabetical order.

Vance Lackey, Scout executive at Boy Scouts of America, Okefenokee Area Council, said what the teen has achieved is astonishing.

“He’s a great kid. It’s a rare feat, what he’s done,” Lackey said. “It’s hard to earn all merit badges from one location. To set a goal, to devise a plan, to execute your plan ... he’s had to coordinate” his own trips to earn many of the badges.

“It’s afforded him the opportunity to meet people and broaden his horizons,” he said.

Creekmore said he’s not done with Boy Scouts just yet — there’s still a chance the national organization will release another badge or two before his 18th birthday. He plans to earn those, too.

Ken Creekmore said his son was able to accomplish what he has through an internal drive.

“When you go into Scouting, the goal is not to earn all of the badges. They don’t promote it, they don’t push it, the troop really couldn’t help you to do it,” Ken Creekmore said. “If

you become an Eagle, you accomplish the highest pinnacle of Scouting. That's the goal. ... Scouts affords opportunities. You're not an expert when you're done with these badges, but you're not an absolute novice, either."

Creekmore said he truly respects his son's achievement.

"I have seen him stick with it, I have seen the dedication that it takes to do that, and I think that's they key to success in Scouting. A boy can make an Eagle, if he sticks with it," he said. "When a boy is 65 and says, 'I'm an Eagle Scout,' there's not too much else he could have done when he was 15 that would have meant nearly so much.

"I wouldn't have become an Eagle Scout if my parents had not encouraged me. I was not anything like the Scout that Griffin is."

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