

The Salt Lake Tribune

Sandy Boy Scout earns all 134 merit badges

Rare feat • Jordan High senior Matt Davis fills up all 134 spaces on his sash.

BY RINNA WADDHANY
SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE
PUBLISHED: MAY 10, 2013 09:51PM
UPDATED: MAY 11, 2013 11:39AM

If Matt Davis' Boy Scouts sash is hardly without an empty space, that's because he didn't miss one badge.

Davis, a senior at Jordan High School, accomplished the rare feat of earning all the merit badges possible — 134 of them.

"It's something that got me to do and explore new things," Davis said about his Boy Scouts experience.

Davis became an Eagle Scout in 2009, the highest rank in the Boy Scouts program. However, the rule allowed him to keep earning merit badges until age 18, which was exactly what he did.

"I kept on a timed schedule, but taking a break here and there," Davis said.

He earned his Eagle rank by collecting money to buy Pony Beads kits to donate to patients at Primary Children's Medical Center. Pony Beads are colorful plastic beads that can be strung to make bracelets, key chains and other crafts. After having visited the hospital, Davis thought that was a good project because older kids could make use of the Pony Beads as well.

"I kept calling businesses, going in and talking to the CEOs, and they were quite willing to help me out," Davis said.

After three months, Davis collected enough money to purchase 750 Pony Beads kits. After earning his Eagle, Davis said he felt motivated to keep going and continue learning new skills.

"It helps me with problem solving," he said. "I'm able to react to different scenarios and be prepared on how to deal with those."

Choosing to pursue merit badges after becoming an Eagle Scout also gave Davis the opportunity to earn palms.

"It's a recognition that you've gone beyond the Eagle," he said. "For every five merit badges, you get a palm."

Davis didn't know about the palms until he was a bit into the work he'd already done. Since there was a three-month wait period for every Palm, he felt he could've gotten more, but he said he's satisfied with the 13 palms he earned.

The six years of Boy Scouts involvement afforded him many fun experiences and great memories, but his fondest one was SCUBA diving.

"I had to get certified," he said. "I took a class, learned how to use the gears and actually had to go down [more than] 60 feet."

Other skills he enjoyed learning included search and rescue, horseback riding and rock climbing, which involved a lot of knot tying. Davis said these activities helped him to not just amass practical but social skills as well.

He comes from a family of Boy Scouts enthusiasts. He said one factor that helped him keep earning merit badges was the support of his family.

"My dad is actually really into camping, helping and motivating us, and my mom inspires me," Davis said.

Pam Davis, Matt's mom, also saw her two older sons achieve Eagle Scout rank, although Matt was the only one who earned all the merit badges.

"The different merit badges, it helps the boys try something new and define things they're interested in," she said. "They get a lot of leadership skills."

One thing that stood out in her mind was the search and rescue.

"Matt set up the whole thing, gathering people and putting them into groups," Pam Davis said.

She said it can be costly to do some of the activities. The SCUBA diving for example cost \$300 plus the supplies, and some activities the scout has to do on his own because the other members can't afford to do it as a group.

In the end, Pam said she was impressed with the hard work her son put in during the final stretch because there were badges added to the list.

"Sometimes it felt like he wasn't going to get there," she said. "He kept going, and it showed that the last mile is the hardest one. I was really proud that he was able to finish the work."

Brady Edwards, a Boy Scout leader, has known Davis for four years.

"He's an extremely motivated young man," Edwards said. "He uses his motivation as his driving force."

Edwards owns a bike shop and let Davis borrow a new bike for a 50-mile ride for a merit badge.

"He got into a wreck the first ride," Edwards said. "He got back and did the 50-miler without training because he knew he had to get it done."



Courtesy Pam Davis Matt Davis, who earned his Eagle Scout in 2009, continued working on merit badges up to his 18th birthday. He was able to earn all 134, and said the experience has broadened his interests.

Davis also attends Canyons Technical Education Center, where he studies graphic design and 3D animation. Although he has his eyes set on either Brigham Young University or the University of Utah, he's planning to serve a two-year LDS mission first.

For his last merit badge, he learned to bugle with an old instrument passed down by his grandfather from World War II. It was perhaps the appropriate challenge to cap his accomplishments as he struggled with it a lot.

"I don't blow that well," he said.

Some of the activities he did in Boy Scouts have now become his hobbies such as bike riding and SCUBA diving at the Homestead Resort Crater in Midway.

closeup@sltrib.com

Twitter: @sltribSouth

—

At a glance

Jordan High senior Matt Davis earned all the Boy Scouts' merit badges, totaling 134.

He also earned 13 palms; each palm is for every five badges earned after the Eagle rank.

For his Eagle project, Davis collected money to buy Pony Beads to donate to the children at Primary Children's Medical Center.

Davis also attends Canyons Technical Education Center and enjoys studying graphic design and 3-D animation.

© Copyright 2013 The Salt Lake Tribune. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.