

Las Vegas student makes history, earns 138th Boy Scout merit badge



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By [Jonah Dylan](#) Las Vegas Review-Journal



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There are well-rounded 17-year-olds, and then there's Cash Karlen.

Karlen, a senior at Palo Verde High School, on Monday night became part of an extremely exclusive group when he earned his 138th Boy Scout merit badge. That's the most anyone can currently earn, and field director Patrick Ballinger said fewer than 600 people have ever earned that honor.

Out of more than 2.5 million scouts.

“I had the most badges for a while, and two of my friends decided they wanted to start challenging me,” Karlen said. “So we were kind of trying to outrace each other, and that’s when I decided that I wouldn’t ever let them get ahead of me by just getting them all.”

Karlen was honored at a scout “Court of Honor,” an event that takes place three times a year to honor scouts at multiple levels. He joined Boy Scout Troop 912 in 2014 and earned his first badge early the next year, later becoming an Eagle Scout in 2018.

The badges are earned for activities ranging from cooking and camping to cycling and dentistry. To earn a “pulp and paper” badge, he visited the Las Vegas Review-Journal office. To earn a “truck transportation” badge, he visited an Amazon facility in California.

So what was his favorite?

“Scuba diving,” he said, almost instantly. For that, he was scuba certified on Catalina Island in California.

And the least favorite?

“Nuclear science.”

His first was archaeology, and his last, earned just a few weeks ago, was “citizen of society,” a newly-created badge.

Karlen wants to study mechanical engineering in college, ideally at the University of Utah. He’s also interested in joining an ROTC program, he said.

To earn every badge, Karlen and his mom, Stacey Tyler, had to travel around the country, especially to get some of the science, technology, engineering and math badges. That meant trips to Arizona, California, Utah and Illinois, among other states. It also meant a total of 109 nights camping, hiking 281 miles and 222 service hours.

He's the youngest of four children and the only one who joined the scouts, his mom said.

"We experienced so much together. The time is — he had more time than all the others crunched together," she said. "It's been amazing, what we've gotten to do."

Contact Jonah Dylan at jdylan@reviewjournal.com. Follow @TheJonahDylan on Twitter.