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Thomasville teen earns all 138 merit badges

By JIMMY TOMLIN ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER

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Colton Morris, a member of Boy Scout Troop 57 in Thomasville, is congratulated by Scoutmaster Bill Bump for earning all 138 merit badges, a rare accomplishment in the scouting world. Colton, 17, received his final merit badge earlier this month.

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THOMASVILLE — If there were a merit badge for earning merit badges, Colton Morris would have it.

The Thomasville teenager, who has been in scouting for more than a decade, completed a rare feat earlier this month, earning his 138th merit badge, which is all the badges offered by the Boy Scouts of America.

“He was basically grinning from ear to ear for two to three days,” says Colton’s dad, Phil Morris, who is an assistant scoutmaster for Troop 57, based at Grace Lutheran Church in Thomasville. “He was so proud.”

According to MeritBadgeKnot.com, a website that maintains a registry of Boy Scouts who have earned all of their merit badges, Colton is only the 545th individual in the 100-plus-year history of the Boy Scouts to earn that distinction.

Colton’s merit badges range from the badges you would expect a Boy Scout to earn — such as backpacking, camping, canoeing and first aid — to more unusual badges that include bugling, genealogy, chess, plumbing and dentistry.

“He’s ambitious, hard-working, and he was eager to go out and get these badges,” says Bill Bump, scoutmaster of Troop 57, which is affiliated with BSA’s Old North State Council. “And he shares so much of his knowledge and scouting abilities with the other kids in the troop. He does a phenomenal job.”

Colton, who is 17 and homeschooled, is the son of Phil and Drema Morris of Thomasville. He got into scouting at age 6, when he joined the Cub Scouts.

“He earned everything you could earn in Cub Scouts, too,” his dad says. “When he got into Boy Scouts, he knew he was going to earn his Eagle by 13, and he said he wanted to earn every merit badge.”

According to Colton, the idea was to help him determine what he wanted to do with his life.

“I wanted to figure out what I wanted to be when I grow up,” he explains, “and I thought getting all the badges might help.”

And what did he learn?

"I really like metalworking and handicraft," Colton says. "I like doing stuff with my hands."

The last merit badge Colton earned — welding — posed a significant challenge because Colton has Lennox-Gastaut syndrome, a type of epilepsy that causes seizures.

"We were concerned about that, because flashing lights are a potential seizure trigger," Colton's father says. "We had to find a merit badge counselor that understood that, and we took all the precautions that we could. Thankfully, it worked out and he got the badge."

jtomlin@hpenews.com | 336-888-3579