

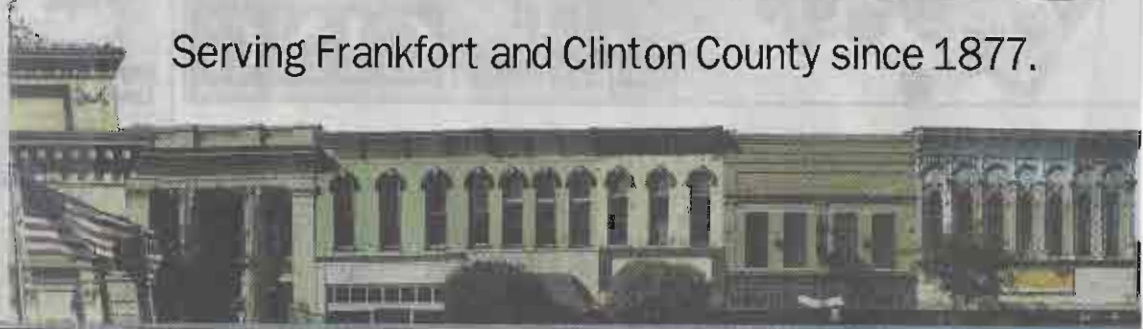


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Boy Scout earns all 133 merit badges

Your Neighbor

BY SHELLEY SMITH
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Life Scout Eric Neidigh of Troop 336 from Mulberry reached the rare accomplishment of earning every merit badge the Boy Scouts offers, 133 badges total.

Eric's mother, Janet Neidigh, said she can recall when her son first told her he wanted to be a Boy

Scout at the age of six. A Boy Scout recruiter visited the elementary school, and he was hooked. He knew, even as a first grader, that being a Boy Scout was his calling in life.

"I've traveled and learned all sorts of things with the badges I've earned," said Eric Neidigh, 16.

He laid out the badges on a table, which takes up two sashes because he has earned so many. Each badge, an accomplishment he proudly wears, tells a story.

Neidigh pointed to one badge with a horn emblem

on it. He said that one was for bugle training. It took him 2 years of bugle lessons to memorize 15 different tunes. He was also required to be the troop bugler for three months, where he would provide his service for community parades or whenever a bugler was needed.

"It's a lot like a trumpet, but with no valves," he said. "It's was really hard to learn."

His mother said Eric approached her at the age of 13, and told her he wanted to try to earn every Boy

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SHELLEY SMITH / ssmith@ftimes.com
MERIT BADGES — Life Scout Eric Neidigh shows off his merit badges. He has earned every merit the Boy Scouts has to offer, 133 badges in total. *Make this image yours. Go to www.ftimes.com.*

Merit: Neidigh awaiting Eagle Scout approval

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Scouts merit badge, a feat that according the Boy Scout's website only 174 have accomplished since 1910.

"He's been a trooper, and it's been a lot of running around for mom and dad too," she said. "It's definitely not for the faint of heart."

Neidigh's goal required a great deal of traveling to seek training from merit badge certified individuals. His travels include Michigan, Wisconsin, North Car-

olina, Kentucky, and Illinois. The furthest Neidigh and his family have traveled was to Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming for fly fishing instruction.

Currently, Neidigh has completed his Eagle Scout project and is waiting for approval for his Eagle Scout status. For his project, he raised \$1,300 and managed the construction of three flights of stairs to enable better public access at Camp Cullom.

Though humble about his accomplishment, Neidigh

said he was proud of what he was able to do with the support of his family.

"It's really cool," he said.

The sophomore at Clinton Prairie High School recently received notification that he has been invited to attend the governor's luncheon in Indianapolis on Dec. 17. His achievement will be highlighted, and he will have the opportunity to meet Gov. Mitch Daniels.

"It's something for him to always be proud of," his mother said.