

High School Sophomore Earns All 139 Boy Scout Merit Badges

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COLUMBIA, MD - Atholton High School sophomore James Obasiolu (15) of Scouts BSA Troop 75 in Columbia, MD, became one of approximately 520 Scouts since 1914 who have earned all of BSA's available Merit Badges, and the first in his Troop to achieve this feat.

Obasiolu earned all 139 merit badges available to BSA Scouts, including the Medicine Merit Badge before it was terminated 12/31/21. The Troop 75 Eagle Scout says, "From Aviation to Horsemanship and Golf to Scuba Diving, I worked on requirements tirelessly, serving as a role model for those in my Troop. Merit Badges are a fantastic opportunity to improve your proficiency in an area of your choosing!"

The site that celebrates Boy Scouts who have earned all the merit badges during their time as a youth scout, meritbadgeknot.com, has confirmed 520 scouts who earned all of the merit badges. It's estimated that an average of 24 Scouts per year earn all the merit badges.

Obasiolu said the biggest challenge was staying motivated & keeping his eyes on the prize. It took him between 10 to 16 hours on average to finish each badge, and he struggled with feelings of stress & frustration along the way. "I looked at other Scouts who've achieved this great feat, and I asked myself, 'How is that possible?' or 'How did they do it?' I'd say that my love of learning & self-discovery propelled me toward my goal," he admitted.

"Each Merit Badge is a story in itself, an embarkment for knowledge on the journey of self-improvement. I learned valuable discipline, organizational, and precision skills as I earned each one," he proclaimed.

Obasiolu's favorite merit badge to earn was Pulp & Paper. "It's so fascinating to see how items like paper are made," he said. "These are things we normally take for granted in our everyday lives, but earning this merit badge gave me a chance to practice gratitude while having a fun time making my own paper."

There are currently 139 merit badges offered by the Boy Scouts of America. The most recent one introduced is Citizenship in Society, which became a requirement for Eagle beginning July 1, 2022.

According to Richard Barnes, Eagle Scout Counselor for Troop 75 and himself an Eagle Scout, "Merit badge offerings regularly change. There are 21 merit badges still available that are essentially the same as the 1911 merit badges, but with different designs: American Business (was Business), Archery, Astronomy, Aviation, Bird Study, Bugling, Camping, Cooking, Cycling, Electricity, Fire Safety (was Firemanship), Fishing (was Angling), Forestry, Gardening, Horsemanship, Painting, Photography, Pioneering, Sculpture, Small Boat Sailing (was Seamanship), and Swimming."

Barnes goes on to add that, "Many merit badges have been discontinued, particularly those associated with farming and special hand skills. These have been replaced by merit badges associated with technology and social issues. Some examples: Digital Technology, Engineering, Geocaching, Genealogy, Inventing, Movie Making, Nuclear Science, and Sustainability. Other recent additions are for social awareness: Disabilities Awareness and Citizenship in Society."

Obasiolu earned his Eagle Scout rank on August 16, 2022, and will be recognized in an Eagle Court of Honor ceremony at Christ Memorial Presbyterian Church in the spring of 2023. Since the inception of the Eagle Scout award in 1912, 2.01 percent of eligible Scouts have earned Scouting's highest honor.

About BSA Troop 75

BSA Troop 75 is a Chartered Unit of the Scouts BSA through Christ Memorial Presbyterian Church, located at 10600 Shaker Drive, Columbia, MD 21046. Troop 75 was formed in 1975. CMPC also chartered a Scouts BSA unit for Girls in 2022.

