

INVESTIGATIONS

## In 2018, this Knoxville scout set a goal to earn every merit badge. 5 years later, he's done it

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Posted: Jul 5, 2023 / 03:48 PM EDT  
Updated: Jul 5, 2023 / 03:48 PM EDT

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (WATE) — A West Knoxville Eagle Scout has achieved a rare accomplishment. He has earned every merit badge the scouting program offers.

Earning merit badges, like citizenship in society, cooking, swimming, lifesaving, robotics, nuclear science and dozens of others give scouts the opportunity to investigate around 138 different areas of knowledge and skills. During his time in scouting, Witt earned 139 merit badges.

"There are 138 that are currently offered and one that is discontinued," he said.

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The discontinued merit badge, "Medicine," is now called Health Care Professions. Witt has both of them.



Witt graduated in 2023 from L&N STEM Academy in Knoxville. He was in the fifth grade when he joined Troop 246 about eight years ago.

Three months ago, he completed his goal to earn every merit badge the scouting program offers, a feat only half of one percent of scouts accomplish. For a busy 18-year-old, time management was put to the test.

“You have to plan something out to get it done. We spend so many nights trying to figure out where we need to go, what we needed to do whether that be in-state or out. We went all over the place,” he said.

Some of those badges were earned either at Merit Badge College events or Boy Scout High Adventure bases.

“We went to Atlanta for surveying. It was one of those big ones. We went to New Mexico, to Philmont, for backpacking. Florida for scuba. So it’s definitely been a very broad trip,” Witt said.

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Witt shared why earning every merit badge became his goal.

“It was in early 2018, I actually saw someone on the news who had done it before. I looked over at my mom and said, ‘I want to do that’ and here we are,” he said.

Witt said the easiest merit badge was fingerprinting, while the most difficult one for him to earn was Scuba.

“It was a very long process. I’m not a big fan of water. So getting over that whole fear was very interesting,” he said.

A year ago, Witt completed his Eagle project. It was the restoration of a historic black cemetery at Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church in Knoxville where he tested his skills learned from earning some of those merit badges.

“There is a lot more that I did not expect to ever be doing. I think that is the main purpose of the badge program is to get the scout to be able to tell every single thing of life and other things they wouldn’t really think of. I never really expected to be scuba diving at any point. Never did I ever think I’d be on a construction site, surveying,” he said.

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On his Eagle Badge, the highest award a scout can earn, are seven Silver Palms and one Gold, representing those 139 merit badges.

“I think it’s an incredible opportunity. I would not at all be the same person that I am today without it. It teaches so much in morals and values for everybody. Especially, doing the badges I got to see a bit of everything, it’s great,” Witt said.

Witt will be enrolling at Pellissippi State Community College next month, with the goal of attending the University of Tennessee where he plans on majoring in Computer Science. Yes, there is a merit badge for that, it’s called digital technology.

On Tuesday, July 11 at Hardin Valley Church of Christ, he will be celebrating his Eagle Ceremony with his family, members of his troop and venturing crew as well as many friends.

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