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Local Eagle Scout achieves rare accomplishment

For The Frederick

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Daniel Free, right, of Germantown, achieved the rare accomplishment of earning all 137 Boy Scouts of America merit badges. Pictured with him is Karl Moline, Scoutmaster of Troop 489.

Courtesy photo

Eagle Scout Daniel Free, 17, of Troop 489 in Germantown achieved the rare status of earning all 137 merit badges currently offered by the Boy Scouts of America. There are about 450 scouts who have earned all the merit badges in the 110-year history of the Boy Scouts.

BSA is among the largest youth organizations in the United States, numbering about 2.3 million

youth participants and supported by just over 1 million adult volunteers. Founded in 1910, scouting's mission is to "prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law." Youth are trained in responsible citizenship, character development and self-reliance.

The Merit Badges are central to the program, offering a variety of training in life skills, exposure to careers, and other topics of interest. At least 21 merit badges must be earned in order to attain the rank of Eagle Scout, 13 of which must be from a list of Eagle-required merit badges.

Daniel joined scouting when he was 6 years old as a cub scout, earning the Arrow of Light, cub scouting's highest award. He bridged into boy scouts near the end of fifth grade and became an Eagle Scout on Oct. 27, 2017, at the age of 15. He had earned 54 merit badges at that time. His Eagle project involved planning and leading other youth in building outdoor stations of the cross at Mother Seton Catholic Church in Germantown, where he also serves on the altar during the mass.

The night he was awarded his Eagle, Daniel said that he "was not satisfied stopping there" and wanted to do more while as he continued his involvement in scouting. That evening, he made it a personal goal to earn the rest of the merit badges before his 18th birthday.

His favorite merit badge subjects were welding and metal working. He says that cycling was the hardest for him personally as it involved multiple bicycling treks covering over 150 miles. His Eagle-required badges covered subjects such as citizenship, personal management, first aid, cooking and physical fitness. Others included a variety of fun subjects such as scuba diving, golf, water sports and athleticism.

His Scoutmaster Karl Moline says "It has been a great pleasure having Daniel as part of Troop 489 starting during his Cub Scout days when he would visit with his older brother Ryan, also an Eagle Scout. Daniel continued to be active in the Troop while pursuing his goal of earning all the merit badges, helping younger scouts start off on their trails to Eagle. The entire Troop has been watching Daniel's countdown to earning all the merit badges, and we could not be prouder of him. His dedication and hard work are an inspiration to all of our scouts."

Daniel is a senior at Clarksburg High School in Clarksburg, where he played on the golf and volleyball teams. He is also a percussionist in the Symphonic Band and the Jazz Band. He plans

to attend college at the University of Maryland to major in secondary education and history.

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