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TOP STORY

Watch now: Goal accomplished: Argenta Boy Scout earns all 137 badges available

Valerie Wells
Aug 26, 2020

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Garrett McMillion is an Eagle Scout from Argenta who has received every merit badge the Scouts has offered. He joined the Scouts in 2013, has two sashes to hold the myriad of badges he has earned.

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JEFF SMUDDE, HERALD & REVIEW

Valerie Wells



ARGENTA — Garrett McMillion has so many badges that they won't all fit on his sash and he has to acquire a second one.

The Eagle Scout, who has been in scouting since he was a Cub Scout in 2008, has earned all of the 137 badges available from Boy Scouts.

“About two years ago, almost three now, I got my Eagle (ranking),” said McMillion, who was only 15 at the time. “Some people started asking, 'Hey, are you going to get them all?' Because I had about half of them then. And it wasn't until last November that I decided that's definitely what I wanted to do.”

In November, he had 80 or 90 badges. **Only 21 are required to pursue Eagle ranking.** As he was working toward the goal of earning all 137 badges, the COVID-19 crisis hit, and that made earning the remaining badges even more of a challenge.

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Earning badges requires a counselor to act as mentor, and activities that can require in-person consultation. For example, for the cycling badge, McMillion had to repair a bicycle in addition to completing several extensive rides, including a 50-mile ride. His younger brother acted as his “buddy” on the rides, but in order to prove to the counselor that he could, indeed, take a bicycle apart, they had to do it over video conference. He also had to video his rides to show that he'd actually done them.

“It is a very rare accomplishment,” said Shane Brown, scoutmaster of McMillion's Troop 104. “He is the first Scout I am aware of in our troop who has done this. Garrett has served in many leadership capacities within Scouts. Within the Order of the Arrow (a national honor society for Scouts) he also serves as the Lodge Chief for Woapink Lodge, which serves the Central Illinois area.”

McMillion turned 18 in August, and that's the cutoff date for Boy Scouts to earn badges, though he is still able to participate in the Order of the Arrow until age 21, and plans to do so. He's also the rare Boy Scout who sticks with the organization so many years, but McMillion said he enjoys it and has no plans to stop before he ages out.

Badges can require varied times to complete. Some might take a few weeks, while others could take months. The Boy Scouts normally hold **badge events** to allow several scouts to work on badge requirements with counselors and materials available,

but those had to be canceled during shutdowns.

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“I had everything planned out, and I was going to earn 40 or 50 (badges) this year,” McMillion said. “I had all the camps, and they each progressively got canceled. There was a few fairs I had right before COVID happened, then when COVID happened, there was a lot I had to do virtually.”

One of the most difficult badges to complete was scuba diving, and that one had to be postponed until things began to open up, he said, because that had to be done in person.

He has two favorite badges: robotics, which he earned at a badge event. His other is water sports, which required him to learn to water ski.

“I got up (on the skis) the second time,” he said. “That was really fun.”

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Besides learning skills and having experiences he might not have had without earning all those badges, McMillion said earning the badges helped him realize what he wants to do for a career.

“As a Webelo, we did an engineering course,” he said. “We made Popsicle stick bridges and put them between tables and then hung weights from them to see which one lasted longest before it broke. After having 27 pounds (hung from it), mine never did. After that I knew I wanted to do something in engineering, and I channeled that in high school by doing **dual credit classes** in engineering tech at Richland (Community College), and I found out I wanted to be an electrician through those programs.”

His plan is to begin his studies at Richland while he waits for an opening in an electrician apprenticeship program where he can pursue journeyman status. The upside to apprenticeship programs is that he will earn money while he learns. He said

he prefers hands-on learning and activity.

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“I enjoyed my dual-credit classes more than any high school class I ever took because I got to get my hands on something and work on something,” he said. “To me that's more interesting and more fun than sitting down and having a class.”

Campfire



1941: In respect to Dan Beard, Boy Scout national commissioner who died, Scouts at Camp Robert Faries are keeping a fire burning constantly during the summer camping season. The boys feed the fire in shifts. Taking their turn, left to right, Darrell Miller, Shelbyville; Peter Brown, Bement and Billy Bishop, Decatur.

H&R file photo