Eagle Scout joins kin in rarefied air

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Aaron Schulze had a lot to live up to after joining the Boy Scouts at age 6.

Schulze's brothers both became Eagle Scouts, the highest rank in Scouting. His oldest brother, David, now 25, had earned all 125 merit badges by 2004, a rare achievement. His other brother, Lance, now 22, did the same in 2007.



"After joining Boy Scouts, I got to watch David at his Eagle Scout ceremony," Schulze said. "I admired how he was honored and decided I wanted to do the same."

With help from his brothers, Schulze set off to continue the tradition.

"I wanted to be just like them," Schulze said. "I thought I would be so cool."

Now an Eagle Scout himself, Schulze recently achieved his dream of earning all available badges - 129 in his case. Schulze, 18, got four extra badges available only this year for the 100th anniversary of Scouting.

"I will always be able to look at my brothers and say, 'I have more badges than you do,'" Schulze said Saturday during an Eagle Court of Honor at St. George Episcopal Church to acknowledge his achievements.

The four extra badges are for carpentry, pathfinding, signaling and tracking. Schulze's other badges include a six-month bird study, more than 50 miles of cycling, and scuba diving, which took about 50 hours of instruction, said his father, <u>Randall Schulze</u>.

While <u>Boy Scouts of America</u> does not keep track of every person to earn every merit badge, "a far from complete list" of 129 Scouts who've accomplished the feat is available at Meritbadgeknot.com

"I figured that earning each badge takes at the very least 10 hours," Randall Schulze said. "When you earn all of the badges, it is basically like a six-month full-time job. For a full-time student like Aaron, that is going way further than above and beyond."

Oldest son David described his own quest to earn every badge.

"After I got my first badge in fingerprinting, I found out how many badges were available and decided to earn as many as I could," he said. "After I had three-fourths of them, I decided I might as well try to get all of them."

Little brother Aaron has earned his share of honors as well.

He designed an outdoor classroom and stage for <u>Redland Oaks Elementary School</u> in the North East Independent School District as his Eagle Scout project. The classroom can seat 100 people and is accessible for those with disabilities.

"The school actually uses it quite a bit," Schulze's father said. "The seating benches are tiered so that students can sit by grade."

Because of his project, Schulze will receive the NEISD'S Superintendent's Award for exceptional service. The honor will join more than 100 awards and letters of congratulations - including letters from Presidents <u>Barack Obama</u>, <u>George W. Bush</u> and <u>Jimmy Carter</u> - that Schulze keeps in a giant binder.

Schulze also has earned a good citizenship award from the <u>U.S. Marine Corps League</u>, a certificate of achievement from the U.S. Secretary of Defense, and a special scouting achievement award from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Schulze's involvement at <u>Clark High School</u> is just as varied as his awards. He's the senior class president and the parliamentarian to the <u>National Honor Society</u>, he sings in the choir, and explores one of his biggest passions, acting.

He attributes his ambitious nature to his Scouting experience.

"Boy Scouts introduced me to so much variety," Schulze said. "When I got to high school, I wanted to do as much as I possibly could."

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