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Amery Scout part of an elite group

April Ziemer
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Amery High School Senior Zach Silvis.

Contributed

A small percentage of Boy Scouts have ever been confirmed of having the distinction of earning all of the merit badges. Amery's Zach Silvis is now one of them.

Silvis joined Cub Scouts in the fall of his First Grade year. "I remember going to a meeting with a recruiter and immediately knowing I wanted to join. My favorite experience of Cub Scouts was the Pine Car Derby races, where we built cars to race down a track. I always made cars that looked cool

because it was easier to get a trophy that way,” he said.

In Fifth Grade, he crossed over from Cub Scouts to Boy Scouts. Silvis said, “I knew I would like Boy Scouts better because I could work at my own pace. Soon after I crossed over, I made the goal to earn all of the merit badges and earn the Eagle rank.”



Silvis has reached his goal. “My Eagle Project was for the Amery Congregational Church Youth Group. The project was a Gaga Pit that used an interlocking system to make set up and take down fast and easy. With extra money, I bought extra balls, an air pump, a Kubb set, a Yard Yahtzee set, a Ladderball set and a Giant Jenga set. I chose this Eagle Project because I believed it would help bring people to the church and give the youth currently going to the church fun activities to do indoor or outdoor,” said Silvis.

He said, “The rank of Eagle is well known for the hard work and effort put into the project and the overall goal of earning the Eagle rank. For most it takes between four and six years of dedication and determination. My leadership, work ethic and time management skills that I gained from the Boy Scouts will also help me in the future.”

The number of possible merit badges to earn has changed over the years. The first Boy Scout from Wisconsin to earn all of them was Walter Scott of Milwaukee, in 1928. He earned 76, which was the total number possible at that time. Silvis has earned 137. Silvis is only the sixth Boy Scout in Wisconsin to conquer the list.

Of the 137 merit badges, 21 are required to earn the rank of Eagle. 13 of those 21 are specific merit badges that must be earned, and the other 8 are electives, meaning the scout can choose from the other 100+ merit badges to earn for his Eagle rank. The merit badges required for the Eagle rank

are Camping, Cooking, Emergency Preparedness OR Lifesaving, Citizenship in the Community, Citizenship in the Nation, Citizenship in the World, Environmental Science OR Sustainability, Hiking OR Cycling OR Swimming, First Aid, Communications, Family Life, Personal Fitness and Personal Management.



Silvis said, “The first merit badge I earned was Leatherwork. I earned this at Tomahawk, our troop’s annual weeklong summer camp in July 2014. I was 11. The last merit badge I earned was Skating. I earned that in October 2020, and I was 17.”

He said Scuba Diving was the merit badge he had the most fun earning. “I went to a weeklong summer camp in northern Minnesota called Many Point to earn this merit badge. Throughout the week, I gradually learned the hand signals and gear and eventually learned to scuba dive and earned my PADI certifications. It was an experience that made me want to go scuba diving any time my family went on vacation near the ocean or in a tropical climate,” Silvis said.

Some of the merit badges proved to be more difficult than others. “The hardest merit badge for me to earn was the Bugling merit badge. Bugling refers to playing the instrument of a bugle, cornet or trumpet, and playing the calls that would normally be heard at military posts. As someone who has never played a brass instrument before, this was a challenging task that took over one and half years to complete.”

Silvis shared his favorite part of scouting is the knowledge and experience that came with the merit badges he completed and the camps and other adventures he went on. “One of the most memorable camps I went on was to a high adventure camp called Rocky Mountain High Adventure Base (RHMAB) in Poncha Springs, CO. Over the five full days myself and my group were at the

camp, we went on a three-day backpacking trip, a half-day of mountain biking, and a day of whitewater rafting on the Arkansas River. While I didn't earn any merit badges at this camp, it was a great experience," he said.

Silvis wanted to give a shoutout to those that have helped him on his journey to earn all of the merit badges. "While I did do the majority of the work, I couldn't have done it without the help of these individuals: Barry Tulkki, Barry Schaefer, Josh Ganje, Ty Dodge, Kevin Trandum, David Pearson, Sue Pearson, Paul Oman, Mark Oman, John Setzer, Jim Trinkle, Annette Trinkle, Joel Trinkle, Liz Trinkle, Michael Buenzli, Scott King, Bill Vierkandt, Kurt Leichtle, Kipp Harris, Ed Thamke, Amanda Thamke, Eric Silvis, Joy Silvis, Steve Wojan, Karl Berndt, Steve Ramine, Dave Heiss, Russell Bagley Sr., Ike Bagley, Jason Whitley, Jacob Meyer, Mark Silvis, Stephanie Page, Asher Page, Ani Kasten, Charles Plumb, Emily Roberts, Tom Benson, Dave Bowman, Scott Briggs, Jeremy Nienow, Allen Carlson and Lisa Reintjes. I know there are others that have helped me, and I apologize if I have missed your name," said Silvis.

Silvis is a senior at Amery High School. In the fall of 2021, he will be attending Wichita State University in Wichita, KS, for an Aerospace Engineering bachelor's degree. He has also been accepted into the honors college at this university.



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