



Tamaqua Eagle Scout earns all 137 merit badges

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Nicholas Wall, an Eagle Scout with Troop 777 in Tamaqua, recently earned all 137 badges. CHRIS REBER/TIMES NEWS

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The requirements to acquire the Eagle Scout rank include earning a minimum of 21 merit badges.

And while Eagle is considered the highest award in scouting, there is a much more exclusive club: Scouts who have earned all 137 of the merit badges.

Recently, Nicholas Wall, an Eagle Scout with Troop 777 in Tamaqua, joined that club.

He was officially awarded the last 10 merit badges during a court of honor ceremony Monday night at Owl Creek Reservoir in Tamaqua.

“We could see he was determined, and then there was no doubt in our mind that once he set that goal for himself, he was going to follow through with it,” said Kevin Steigerwalt, scoutmaster of Troop 777.

Completing every merit badge was a goal that Wall set for himself when he was just 11 years old. It started at summer camp, where Scouts earn a lot of their badges. His first summer, another Scout encouraged him to try doing a couple of extra badges on top of his normal camp schedule. From there, he was hooked.

“Afterward I texted mom and said, ‘I got two extra merit badges.’ That was the moment I realized I can actually get them all,” Wall said.

It took Wall six years to earn 137 merit badges. That’s an average of two merit badges per month.

In the 100-plus year history of the Boy Scouts, fewer than 500 Scouts have completed every single merit badge. The accomplishment is so uncommon that the traditional merit badge sash isn’t designed to hold all 137. Wall’s family made him a special sash to hold all of his badges, and even that one is covered front and back.

Wall wasn’t shy about sharing his goals with his parents and Scout leaders. It didn’t take long for him to convince them that he was actually going to accomplish it. Other Scouts have set the goal before, but following through is something different.

“We told him to go for it, because we know what kind of a kid he is. He’s in the band. He’s a grade A student. He just excels at whatever he puts his hand to,” said Ann Girard, assistant scoutmaster of Troop 777.

For many of the badges, Wall had to seek out leaders from other troops who are certified as badge counselors.

This summer, summer camp was canceled. But Troop 777 held its own camp at Owl Creek, which allowed him to complete a couple of the last badges he needed. For attending the camp, the Scouts also got a novelty merit badge for “social distancing,” designed to look like the coronavirus under a microscope. That can’t be worn on the sash.

All told, in the last two months he completed nine badges. One was scuba diving, which required him to become certified in scuba. He is still officially a Boy Scout until his 18th birthday in November. Before then, he hopes to complete some of the organization’s religious awards.

He did it all while being an honor student, and participating in many extracurricular activities. He participated in soccer, track, chorus, band and drama club. He’s a black belt in karate, and certified as a lifeguard and scuba diver. He is a member of National Honor Society, Spanish Honor Society, world language club, STEP Up, and attends Zion Lutheran Church.

The next step for Wall is attending college. It’s possible that he could end up going into a field he explored while earning a merit badge. And he hopes to continue to give back to the scouting program, which has been so useful for him.

“I’ve already asked what merit badge counselor I can be - definitely winter sports and kayaking.

“If I could get a job in scouting, I’d take it in an instant,” he said.

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Congratulations Nicholas. You set the finest example of BSA

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Congratulations! Such an amazing accomplishment.

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Congratulations neighbor, Nicholas. You make your family and community proud.

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Kudos to you Nicholas and to those that have supported your endeavors along the way. Young man you are an inspiration and your future is whatever you want it to be. Best of luck

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