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2 cousins earn every Boy Scout badge

By Elizabeth Callen/Editor

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Distant cousins Charlie Aasen and Conrad Gausmann met each other at a Boy Scouts merit badge class December. Also pictured are Aasen's mother, Joanie, and Gausmann's father, Peter.

Submitted

Thanks to their involvement in the Boy Scouts of America, two distant cousins are now friends and can lay claim to a feat that few other fellow scouts can.

In December 2013, Charlie Aasen attended a merit badge class in North St. Paul with his mom. They happened to be standing in the check-in line directly behind Conrad Gausmann and his dad, whose last name Aasen's mother immediately recognized as her maiden name. As it turned out, the two families are related.

“They talked for a while, and they were able to find out that we share a great, great, great, great grandfather,” Gausmann said. “I think that's so cool that they would be able to make that connection there.”

That night, the two 11-year-olds made a pledge to each other. They were going to every Boy Scout merit badge possible—all 137 of them. Now, as two recent high school graduates— Aasen of Mounds View High School and Gausmann of Hopkins High School—they can say they've fulfilled that promise.

Aasen says that a little friendly competition kept him and Gausmann motivated throughout the years.

“We have a spreadsheet where we can both see who earned which merit badge. Occasionally, I'd see he (Gausmann) had earned more badges than I had, so I'd try to one-up him,” he said. “We'd go back and forth like that throughout the years.”

Aasen earned his final badge in October 2019, and Gausmann followed shortly after in January 2020. They are now a part of an elite group of Boy Scouts who have earned all merit badges possible, only about 250 since the organization's founding in 1910.

Both Aasen and Gausmann say that their experiences in Boy Scouts helped them discover new interests and potential career paths. Aasen works as an Emergency Medical Technician in Minneapolis, where he applies the first aid skills he developed through scouting every day. In the fall, he will go to paramedic school, after which he plans on pursuing a bachelor's degree in environmental science.

Gausmann said working towards the many environment-related merit badges piqued his interest in environmentalism and sustainability. It also inspired his Eagle Scout project, in which he built an assembly line to package upwards of 75,000 milkweed seeds to restore monarch habitats

throughout the Twin Cities. Come fall, Gausmann will attend the University of Manitoba where he also plans on studying environmental science.

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