

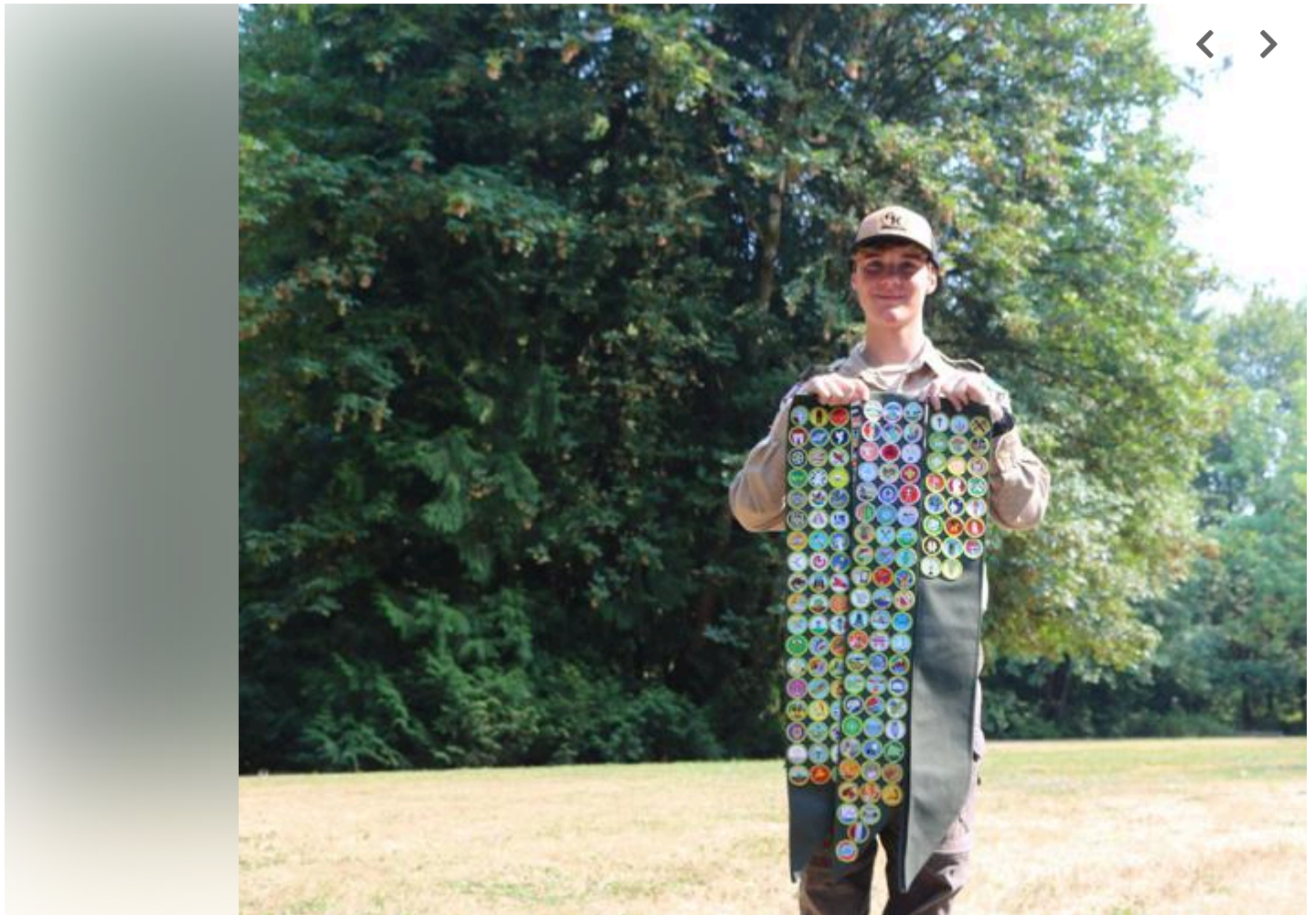
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FEATURED

West Linn Boy Scout earns all 138 merit badges

Holly Bartholomew
Aug 16, 2024

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Local scout Aaron Abrahamsen earned all 138 merit badges.

Staff photo: Holly Bartholomew

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Learning about everything from emergency preparedness to scuba diving, cooking, archery, pulp and paper, climbing, coin collecting and dozens of other topics, a West Linn Boy Scout from Troop 149 has achieved the rare feat of earning all 138 possible merit badges.

Aaron Abrahamsen, an Eagle Scout and recent West Linn High School graduate, earlier this year reached the milestone that less than 600 Scouts in history have achieved.

Abrahamsen joined Troop 149 in fifth grade after moving to West Linn from Arizona. A few years into his journey, as COVID-19 forced some changes within the Scouts,, Abrahamsen started to ramp up his collection of merit badges.

“They were doing some online merit badges and I was able to do a lot with other troops across the country,” he said. “This was something to do because there wasn’t much going on as everyone was locked down.”

During the pandemic, Abrahamsen said he earned about 80 merit badges — including one for emergency preparedness, which involved building a small shelter.

Abrahamsen said he and his dad started joking about the possibility of earning all 138 merit badges once he’d gotten 60.

“That joke started in 2021 and then 2022 rolled around and I was in a semi-serious competition with another Scout in our troop who wanted to get more badges than his brother,” he said. With a bit of competitive spirit as motivation, Abrahamsen kept on collecting.

Trying out so many activities on the journey to obtain all 138 badges also helped him discover his passions. After obtaining a badge for rowing in seventh grade, he went on to join Lake Oswego Community Rowing, and even rowed at the youth national competition. He is now considering trying out for the rowing team at Oregon State University, where he will start school in the fall.

Working for badges in photography and graphic design also inspired him to take classes in those subjects in high school, while his programming badge led him on the path to studying computer science at OSU.

Last year, he also obtained the scuba diving badge and is now certified to scuba dive in open water. Though the water was cold the day he got the badge, Abrahamsen said, he now really enjoys scuba diving and plans to continue.

According to Abrahamsen, cooking was one of the hardest badges to earn. It required him to cook with various instruments, like a jet boil or a dutch oven, and in different scenarios like while camping or on the trail backpacking.

Perhaps it's obvious that Abrahamsen learned a lot —138 different lessons, actually — as he earned each merit badge, but rather than how to swim or sail or build a fire, he most valued what he was taught about leadership.

As a patrol leader for his troop, Abrahamsen led meetings and helped younger Scouts earn the badges they were most interested in.

“Scouting gives you an empty slate to make your own style of leadership — with the guidelines of ‘don’t yell at the kids,’” Abrahamsen said. “It very much teaches you how group dynamics work.”