



Twin brothers earn 121 merit badges — each

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Nathan and Matthew Anderson, 17 year-old twin brothers of Spanish Fork, have earned every merit badge the Boy Scouts of America has to offer -- a total of 121.

The boys earned their Eagle awards when they were 12 and one-half years old. After achieving their Eagle rank, the boys still had six years of scouting left, so they set a goal to earn all of the remaining badges. The boys took very different routes with their Eagle projects.

Nathan wanted to do something that would benefit others close to home that would be a "hands on" type of project. He organized a team of Scouts who constructed several bat hotels and mounted them in trees along the Diamond Fork Campground walking trail. This project was to encourage bats to inhabit the area thereby helping control the mosquito population and the spread of West Nile Virus.

Matthew's project benefited others very far from home. After learning that an LDS Branch of the Church in Croatia wanted to organize a library with Church books that were not available to their members, Matthew organized a book drive to donate to this cause.

His project resulted in an expansive library collection that has enabled the Croatian members to not only increase their knowledge of Church history and doctrine, but also aided them in the study of the English language.

Nathan and Matthew come from a long line of Scouters. Their grandfather, Ray L. Anderson, was the first in his ward to earn the Eagle rank and he also earned every merit badge offered at that time, a total of 117.

Later he worked as a professional executive for the Old Baldy Council and Orange Empire Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America for over 20 years.

Their father, Eric L. Anderson, became an Eagle Scout at the age of 14 and he has been involved in Scouting as an adult for over 25 years. Eric has strongly encouraged and supported the scouting efforts of his sons. The Anderson twins' favorite badges to earn -- camping, backpacking and wilderness survival -- were also some of the most difficult because of the number and lengths of the camps and hikes required.

Probably the hardest badge to earn was bugling; although the twins play the violin and viola, neither had learned to play a brass instrument before. Some of the easiest badges, they report, were Indian lore, rifle shooting and woodworking because they enjoy carpentry and carving. They also liked earning badges related to reptiles and amphibians because they had pet lizards, frogs, snakes, turtles and an iguana.

The final badge the boys earned was dog care. When they were 12, their parents were not interested in getting them a dog, promising them one only if they completed all the other merit badges first. The boys took that as a challenge and immediately went to work on the other merit badges putting off bugling until the end.

When they completed bugling, they chose a cute Beagle puppy that they named Bridger to earn the last merit badge. Bridger is well-cared for and he is a fitting reward for the twins who have earned the privilege of having a dog. Scouting interested the boys in other types of animals as well and it taught them to be persistent in the pursuit of goals.

They became intrigued by the sport of falconry when a man brought a golden eagle to their Eagle Court of Honor. They then began the process of becoming apprentice falconers taking the necessary test to get a license and permits to trap red tailed and kestrel hawks in the wild.

They have successfully trapped and trained two beautiful red tailed hawks that they named Horus and Hank. Because of their love of the outdoors, the boys have developed additional interests and excelled in hunting, trapping, taxidermy and leather working. Nathan and Matthew have also earned their Duty to God awards.

They say that working on their merit badges taught them how to set goals and work toward them, so they were prepared to apply the same principles in achieving this award. This summer, for the fourth year, the twins will be members of the staff at the Skyline Course of On-Belay, a leadership training camp for Varsity Scouts.

The camp includes rock climbing, bouldering, rappelling, zip lines, biking and water activities. Every night the participants are in a new camp and have to build their own shelter. They also have to search for hidden food using a GPS.

The training helps the young men taking the course to run a Varsity team in their own scout troops when they return home. Nathan and Matthew recently graduated from Spanish Fork High School, where they both wrestled and participated in track and cross-country.

They also were enrolled this past year at the Mountainland Applied Technology College in carpentry and building construction, earning 11 college credits. They helped to build a house from foundation to finish, learning about materials, tool use, design and blueprint reading, building site layout, concrete, framing methods and exterior and interior finishes.

The boys plan to work and go to college this year before serving an LDS mission when they are 19. Nathan and Matthew are members of Venturing Crew 870 from the Crosswinds First Ward, of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Palmyra District, of the Boy Scouts of America.