



## Ramapo Valley District, Northern New Jersey Council, BSA

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On Sunday, October 13, 2019, at 3pm, Scouts BSA Troops 133 and 933 held their Fall Court of Honor at the Old Stone Church Fellowship Hall in Upper Saddle River. During the ceremony, Eagle Scout Robert Bakal was recognized for earning every BSA Merit Badge. While becoming an Eagle Scout requires the completion of 21 merit badges, the very rare accomplishment of earning every merit badge has only been completed by fewer than 450 Scouts since the program began in 1910. While the total number of merit badges has fluctuated over the years with added and discontinued badges from the original 57 badges to the current 137 badges, Robert has actually earned 138 (including one, Computers, that was discontinued in 2014). Some merit badges took a few hours while others required months of effort. During his Scouting career, Robert has hiked hundreds of miles, spent many weeks camping in the woods, and participated in BSA High Adventure trips at Summit Bechtel Reserve and Florida Sea Base.

His hardest merit badge was Dog Care (he is allergic to dogs and had to wear gloves), and his last merit badge was Water Sports, for which he learned to water ski this past summer. Along his journey, he conducted chemistry experiments in the Princeton Plasma Physics Lab and whitewater kayaked class 3 rapids in the Youghiogheny River, met with engineers, entrepreneurs, lawyers, professional film producers, and journalists, among others. He became a PADI-certified Open Water diver and learned to water ski. For his final push to complete the badges a month before he turned 18, he adopted the Avengers Endgame slogan of "Whatever it takes."

Robert's advice to other Scouts: "These badges have been an opportunity to learn something new in entirely different fields. You have this opportunity, too! You don't have to Eagle and out. You can get involved in Scouting outside the Troop and the week you spend at Nobe. You can be active with the OA and go to National Jamboree or the High Adventure Bases. You can even work at Nobe. But, you don't need to earn every single merit badge. You don't need to earn half the badges. You don't even need to earn 21 if you don't want to. But you must continue to learn. Be it through Scouts, or school, or clubs, it doesn't matter. But you need to challenge yourself somehow. Find what makes you passionate and makes you grow as a person. Then, push harder than you think is possible, become the best you that you can be. That will make you extraordinary in your own way. Whatever it takes."

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