

Lumberton Eagle Scout earns all 137 merit badges

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17-year-old Eagle Scout Jaxson Bonsall earned all 137 merit badges in the Boy Scouts of America organization, a feat less than 1 percent of all Eagle Scouts have accomplished.

LUMBERTON — Jaxson Bonsall, an Eagle Scout in Hainesport's [Troop Five](#), this month completed a two-year effort to earn all of the [Boy Scouts of America](#) organization's 137 merit badges, just before the cutoff — his 18 birthday on Saturday.

Along the way, he did not just get to cover his uniform sash with patches — he also got to learn more about the world, and about himself.

Earning 21 merit badges is one requirement for a Boy Scout to rank up to [Eagle Scout](#), the organization's highest level, but Jaxson had 86 badges by the time he qualified for the honor in 2016.

"I just said, 'I have 86, I might as well get them all,'" he said.

Over the course of that effort, Jaxson realized he likes skiing — on water and on land — and his family said he spent more than a year trying to master 15 different bugle calls for the bugling badge.

Todd Bonsall, Jaxson's father and one of Troop Five's leaders, said his own scouting experience was cut short when his troop disbanded. He became involved in Scouts again when Jaxson showed interest, and Bonsall has enjoyed the years of camping, kayaking, and quality time with his son.

"Obviously I'm very proud of his accomplishments, and was always there every step of the way to support him," Bonsall said.

He cited just 381 Eagle Scouts who have earned all 137 merit badges throughout the history of the organization — a figure confirmed by [Merit Badge Knot](#), an organization that works to track the achievement. With 2,485,473 Scouts reaching the Eagle rank since the 1900s according to [scoutingmagazine.org](#), one could estimate that less than 1 percent of all Eagle Scouts have completed the task Jaxson undertook.

Ultimately, Jaxson wanted to pursue each and every merit badge because of their diversity — the badges and the new experiences they represented were always his favorite part of scouting. He attended numerous summer camps and weekend classes where he earned badges alongside friends from his troop, and took on some of the tasks solo.

He is an advanced scuba diver today, although he did not think he would even enjoy the activity when he first donned a wetsuit and oxygen tank in pursuit of the scuba diving badge. In working toward oceanography and engineering badges, he found two passions and realized he could combine them in his studies and future career.

Shortly after graduating from the Burlington County Institute of Technology's Medford campus Wednesday night, having studied electronic and computer engineering, Jaxson will finish his associate's degree through BCIT's partnership with Rowan College at Burlington County. In the fall, he will move on to Virginia Tech's Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering program and hopes to help create more environmentally-conscious military vessels.

SCOUTING THE STATS

Boy Scouts earn merit badges for learning new skills and completing tasks. There are 137 badges in all, covering areas from wilderness survival to engineering.

Sources: <https://blog.scoutingmagazine.org/> and <http://www.meritbadgeknot.com/registry.htm>

Scouts set him on that path, just like it set him on 136 others. After years of trying things he would not have chosen independently, and finding out his own likes and dislikes by trial and error, Jaxson said he would recommend to any Scout that they try as much as possible.

"It has definitely given me a lot of ability to try new things and explore what I like and don't like," the 17-year-old said. "And it has really opened my eyes to a lot of things I wouldn't have considered before."