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KSTU

South Jordan scout has earned all 132 merit badges

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The goal of every boy scout is to earn at least 21 merit badges and become an Eagle Scout, but one scout from South Jordan went much further, earning every possible merit badge.

Nathan Christensen, a senior at Bingham High, is autistic, but he lets his accomplishments--he's in the marching band, has his own car and went to his school's prom earlier this week--instead of his disability define him.

Nathan has earned all 132 merit badges, from camping to journalism. He says he started working on them when he was 11 years old.

"We didn't know then if he would ever be able to accomplish some of these things. Things like whitewater rafting, and climbing and backpacking. He had to backpack for 30 miles. Stuff like that," said Sandy Christensen, Nathan's mother. "We didn't know if it would happen, but we figured if we set a goal like that, even if he only did half of it he would have achieved a ton of things."

Sandy says scouting was a key to helping Nathan--who didn't speak until age 7--learn social skills.

"This is the perfect way to teach him a little bit about a lot of things and it makes it so he can have better conversations, so he can talk to people," said Sandy.

Nathan has binders for each badge to remind him of all his past work, something he says has helped inspire his future.

"I was thinking about writing stories and try to get them published, talking about Scouts," he said.

Nathan's mother says his accomplishments are proof that children with autism can do anything. It might be harder, but they can work at it.

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