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## Scout Completes All Merit Badges

There's a poster on the wall above his bed. The poster, entitled "The Merits of Scouting," is nothing more than a picture of little round patches representing all of the different merit badges available in 2001. But for Travis Cochran, age 18, of Cedarpines Park, it represents a personal goal and a long journey of more than six years of hard work.

When Travis was nearly eleven years old, having just completed Cub Scouts and earning his Arrow of Light award, he was taken to the Scout Shop to get fitted for his new Boy Scout uniform. There was a poster hanging on the wall which showed all of the available merit badges back in 2001. "Has anyone ever earned every merit badge before?" he asked his dad. His dad replied that it had probably been done, but that it was very rare and he personally knew of no one to accomplish it. In response, Travis said, "Dad, if you buy me that poster, I'll earn them all!"



Travis is a member of BSA Troop 104, in Lake Arrowhead, California. On May 14, 2008, just one week before his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, he completed the requirements to earn his very last merit badge – Bugling. While Travis played the piano, this was no small feat, considering that Travis had never played a horn instrument of any kind before. After football season was over and first semester finals were past, Travis spent three months practicing and training after school, three times a week, with his instructor, Ms. Wendy M. Watson of Mentone, CA. Travis earned a total of 122 merit badges – every merit badge offered during the course of his scouting career. That, in and of itself, is a big achievement, but it doesn't stop there. Along the path to attaining this goal, Travis also earned many other awards and honors.

Travis earned his Eagle Scout rank on August 21, 2003. The path to Eagle Scout required earning 21 of those 122 merit badges and completion of a community service project. His Eagle Scout project involved the restoration of Cedarpines Park Community Park, totaling over 400 man hours and several months of development and preparation. Between August 2003 and May 2008, Travis also acquired a total of 20 Eagle Palms. Seven bronze palms, seven gold palms and six silver palms, which are awarded for remaining active in scouts after making the rank of Eagle Scout, for every three months and every additional five merit badges earned above Eagle Rank. Travis was also awarded the "National Certificate of Merit" from BSA's National Office for his help and assistance in saving a man's life while on a backpacking trip along 55 miles of the Pacific Crest Trail. In all, he earned four 50 Miler Awards for Backpacking and four 50 Miler Awards of Whitewater Rafting in Northern California.

During his years in scouting, Travis attended ten different weeks of BSA Scout Summer Camp at Camp Emerson, Idyllwild, CA and one week at Camp Helendade, Running Springs, CA. While at camp, Travis helped his troop set a Council swimming record. Over a two-week period, he swam 123 individual miles out of a troop total of 1,255 miles. As Travis rose in rank, he began teaching classes in Field and Life Science, Swimming and Lifesaving. He earned the BSA Lifeguard Award four times and really enjoyed lifeguarding during summer camp.

In January 2002, he began working with USFS Rangers, Mrs. Linda Stamer, Wildlife Biologist, Big Bear USFS station and Jack Kennedy, Lytle Creek USFS station, on the rarest and most difficult BSA Award available – The Silver Hornaday Medal & Award. It is so rare that a vast majority of people inside the Boy Scouting program have never seen a Medal nor know of a recipient. Many Boy Scout councils across America have never had a Hornaday Medal recipient in the entire history of their councils. Nationwide, 500 to 600 scouts apply annually for this award – while on average approximately three are awarded the Silver Medal and five to six are awarded the Bronze Medal per year. To put that into perspective, approximately 51,500 young men earn the rank of Eagle Scout nationwide, while there are usually no more than 7 or 8 Hornaday Medals awarded annually. Some of the requirements include: Earning up to another 20 merit badges in different fields of life science, and working with a conservation officer to develop and conduct four different major conservation projects in the fields of Soil and Water Conservation, Fish and Wildlife Management, Forestry and Range Management and Invasive Species Control.

Travis' four Hornaday Conservation projects totaled over 2,200 man-hours, compiled over a 2 ½ year period. When his four different conservation project reports were completed and his application submitted to the National Boy Scout office, he was awarded the Bronze Hornaday Medal on August 30, 2004. He became the 1,102nd Bronze Hornaday Medalist in the entire history of Boy Scouts. While he was honored, Travis had applied for the Silver Medal and he was told that if he wanted to go for the Silver Medal, he would need to do another much bigger conservation project and make sure to that he got press coverage. Travis went back to planning and development with USFS Ranger, Linda Stamer. Between September 2004

and December 2006, Travis completed a major forestry conservation project that totaled 800 man hours. He taught a large group of approximately 150 cub scouts how to properly plant 100 pines trees, then he traveled to that location, a 45 minute drive one way, to water and care for these trees – twice a week through the spring, summer and fall months for next two years, to ensure that the young trees took root and grew. In late Spring 2007, Travis re-submitted his Bronze application write-ups, along with his fifth project report, to BSA 's National Office in Irving, Texas. On October 2, 2007, Travis was award the Silver Hornaday Medal, making him the 1,123rd Silver Hornaday Award Medalist and one of only six scouts in the entire history of BSA nationwide (from 1914 to 2008), to have earned both the Bronze and Silver Hornaday Conservation Awards! Travis became the first Scout in BSA history in San Bernardino and Riverside Countries to have ever earned the Bronze or the Silver Hornaday Medals.

Don Townsend, CEO of Boy Scouts - California Inland Empire Council, Redlands, said, " I have been a professional in scouting for the past 40 years, in many different councils across America. I will retire in December 2008, and I have never known any Scout during my entire career that has earned even the Bronze Hornaday Medal, let alone the Silver Hornaday Medal – and then to have earned and been awarded both of them, is even more incredible. I have also never known of any scout that has ever earned every merit badge. These are truly unbelievable achievements, each in their own right. To have accomplished *all* of these achievements, truly makes Travis one of the most distinguished scouts in BSA's national history! I have known Travis and his family since he was a Cub Scout, and I was so impressed by Travis' intention to earn every merit badge, that I loaned him my own personal bugle from my youth to support him in his quest. He has shown what is possible through years of tenacity, hard-work, and dedication. I hope his example will inspire many other scouts to strive for this level of excellence."

Travis says, "Of all the merit badges, Shot Gun, Rifle Shooting, Skiing, Water Skiing, and Whitewater Rafting were a few of my favorites. The worst one was Wilderness Survival, because the camp counselor made us set-up our shelter on top of a red ant colony and he would not allow us to move it. I spent the whole night trying to fight off ants – the worst night ever! The Energy and Environmental Science merit badges were probably the most difficult." Trying to locate merit badge counselors for all of those merit badges was also difficult at times. Merit badge counselors are volunteers in their chosen profession or hobby, who give freely of their time and knowledge to help scouts learn something new. "This goal became a journey, as I learned countless new skills, gained a newfound appreciation for numerous professions and was exposed to many different hobbies. I'm really grateful to all of the counselors that helped me along the way – they are a great example of what it means to 'give back' to your community."

Travis graduated from Arrowhead Christian Academy in Redlands, CA on June 7<sup>th</sup>. He departs as the only current four-year Varsity Football player. He also lettered in Track three years and one year of Soccer, and earned eight Scholar Athlete Awards for each sport and season he played. Travis is one of the top students in his class, and was honored as being in the top 1% of high school seniors in San Bernardino County last November. He earned 100% Lifetime Membership in California Scholarship Federation for all four years of high school and Academic Achievement awards for maintaining a GPA of 4.0 or higher for all four years. Travis was also a staff member for the award-winning "Wings" yearbook for the past two years. Travis had the honor of being chosen to represent the Redlands Chapter of the American Legion for California Boys' State, in Sacramento, June 2007, where he learned all about the election process. He was elected Boys' State Lt. Governor, capturing 62% of the popular vote out of the 1,000 delegates from across California and had the opportunity to meet Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Travis is currently wait-listed at his dream college – Stanford, where he has wanted to go since he was a small boy. He says he believes in miracles, but if he doesn't get in, he has chosen to attend UC San Diego, possibly transferring to Stanford or USC in the future. He has chosen to declare a double major in Broadcast Journalism/Communication and Business/Economics.

1230 Indiana Court, Redlands, CA 92374 | (909)793-2463 | [webmaster](#)  
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