

Boy Scout Earns 141 Merit Badges

By Marilyn Forbes

Needing not one but two separate sashes, Aaron Coffman of Boy Scout Troop 150 has made earning merit badges a full-time passion.

A scout since the age of 5, Coffman, now 18, said he was determined to do something only a few hundred scouts have ever accomplished before him - earn every merit badge available to him.

"I earned 141 all in total," Coffman said of the 136 available badges plus a few limited special badges that the teen also earned. He earned his first badge, Forestry, when I was nine."

In scouting, a scout can actively earn badges up until they are 18 years of age and Coffman found that in the last year, he had to make a push to earn the remaining badges.

"I needed 40 this past year," Coffman said, adding he earned 18 Dec. 11 and was no longer able to earn badges but received his last one prior to his birthday. "I always said that I wanted to earn all the badges so I really had to work for the last few months. It was a lot of work but it was worth it."

Coffman's Scoutmaster Darrin Ullery said that he is proud of the Scout who completed an amazing feat by earning all of his badges.

"He earned all the available merit badges and he is only the 271st scout to do so since 1910 when scouting was founded," Ullery said.

Coffman said he enjoyed



Boy Scout Aaron Coffman, 18, goes through his book listing all of his badges.

earning the badges that took him everywhere from in the sky to in the woods to in the water.

"It's been fun and also educational," Coffman said. "A lot of them were difficult, but I faced the challenge and I got it done."

Coffman said that most of the merit badges earned are not just given for completed specific tasks or programs, but also offer a solid educational factor.

"A lot of the merit badges also are geared towards a career or occupation," Coffman said, explaining that some badges also require research into related fields of study. "Earning them is very educational."

Ullery said he is proud of the scout's accomplishment and said scouting encourages the earning of the badges.

"We really push them to earn the merit badges," Ullery said. "Not only do you earn the badge but you also learn a new

skill."

Coffman said one of his most challenging and also most memorable merit badge was the Wilderness Badge.

"I had to construct my own shelter in the woods and stay in for one night," Coffman said. "It's actually something that I have done several times since then."

Now that Coffman turned 18, he will serve as an assistant scout master for the troop based in Bullsken and Conellsville and plans to stay in



Needing two sashes, Scoutmaster Darrin Ullery and Aaron Coffman, 18, hold up all of Coffman's 141 merit badges.

the organization.

"I plan to stay with scouting forever," Coffman said. "I've enjoyed it and it has taught me responsibility, confidence and leadership."

And for his extraordinary feat?

"I never for one minute doubted that I would be able to do it," Coffman said of his earning of all his merit badges. "I am thankful that I had enough people who were able to help me to get it done."

Ullery said Coffman is a fine example of a good scout.

"He is my example guy," Ullery laughed. "He is a big influence over the other scouts. I say to them, look at Aaron. You too can do this."

Coffman wishes to extend a thank you to everyone who has helped him to achieve his goal.

Marilyn Forbes is a contributing writer for West Penn Media Group.