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Two brothers earn every Scout merit badge possible

By Sarah Petersen , Deseret News

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Aaron, 17, and Joshua Egbert, 14, are two of only about 200 scouts in the history of the Boy Scouts of America to have completed every merit badge available, today a total of 137. (Courtesy of Allyson Egbert)

HENDERSON, Nev. — Aaron, 17, and Joshua Egbert, 14, are two of only about 200 Scouts in the history of the American Boy Scouts to have completed every merit badge available, today a total of 137.

In fact, it takes two sashes for each boy to showcase the hard work and knowledge he has gained during his time in Scouts, having learned about aviation, engineering, medicine, computer science and many other careers, along with physical activities such as motorboating, kayaking, cycling and archery.

It hasn't been a path walked alone; Aaron and Joshua agreed completing every merit badge has involved the whole family, determining vacations and trips for the past few years. Yet neither the boys nor

their family would trade it for anything.

"It's been a family thing," mother Allyson Egbert said. "My three daughters were always very supportive. Whenever we would go somewhere and do something unusual they would ask, 'Does this have something to do with a merit badge?' It often did and they learned a lot too."

While the elder Egbert completed his Eagle requirements while only 12 years old and continued to pursue many other merit badges beyond the 21 required, it wasn't until his court of honor that his family learned it was his goal to complete every badge available.

"He kind of surprised us both by saying he was going to go get all of the merit badges," father Martin Egbert said. "I didn't know that that had been his thought, so once he made that statement it was like, 'OK, this is going to be challenging.'"

And the boys will be the first to say it has been a lot of work, but Aaron explained it had been something he had set as a goal since he was an 11-year-old Scout.



Aviation merit badge. (Courtesy of Allyson Egbert)

"One of my friends and I both decided we would get all of the merit badges," Aaron said. "It was both of our desires to pursue a task that few people had done before."



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As the older brother, Aaron was already devoted to his goal before his younger brother entered Boy Scouts.

"Aaron decided to go for all the merit badges, so, of course, since I'm his younger brother, I have to go for all the merit badges," Joshua said.

Aaron admitted the two have been pretty competitive in their mutual goal. And they reached that milestone this summer, with Aaron finishing in May and Joshua just a few months after.

"I kind of had the lead of being the older brother and starting a couple years earlier," Aaron said. "He tried to catch up, but I guess I still pulled out in the end."

When asked why they

put so much time and effort into their quest, Aaron and Joshua both said the experience and skills they have gained through the Boy Scout program have been invaluable.

"I thought Scouting was a great tool to be able to progress and learn new things, and I thought that getting all my merit badges would be able to help my understanding of a lot of different fields," Aaron said.

"Doing every single one was a good way to grasp all of the knowledge that I could through Boy Scouts. The Eagle requirement required us to have 21 merit badges and I thought that was a great accomplishment, but I thought that I could go on and do all of them. I'm glad I did it."

Once Joshua turned 11, both brothers began to work on badges together. Joshua also completed his Eagle requirements at age 12, just before his 13th birthday.

"My first merit badge was composite materials," Joshua said. "That was a pretty hard one to start out on; I had just turned 11. Aaron was already working on it, so I decided that would be my first one because I had the opportunity to do it."



Joshua participates in BMX high adventure. (Courtesy of Allyson Egbert)

Working together as brothers has made the massive project of achieving 137 merit badges mean a little bit more.

"We did an innumerable amount of merit badges together," Aaron said. "I think just doing it together at the same time and doing them at the same place, I think that really helped



Aaron participates to earn the Water sports merit badge. (Courtesy of Allyson Egbert)

us grow our relationship and come closer together."

In fact, the teens agreed one of their favorite merit badges was when they had the chance to work together on the scuba diving badge.

"My favorite merit badge was scuba diving, which was also the hardest merit badge I have ever done," Joshua said. "It was super, super fun; we went and did it

in Utah to get certified."

While scuba diving was also a favorite of Aaron's, he said he really enjoyed completing the bugling badge.

"Bugling was a really interesting one," Aaron said. "I'd been playing the piano for about 12 years and I was familiar with music, but bugling kind of changed that all up. It was a real challenge, but it turned out to be really fun."

Although many of the merit badges provided fun opportunities, the brothers had to make some sacrifices in some other areas of life.



Camping merit badge. (Courtesy of Allyson Egbert)

"A lot of the time with Boy Scouts, doing all these merit badges, I had to take off time with things that I had wanted to do, but doing all the merit badges has been able to help me do a lot of different things that are really important in becoming a great person in the community," Aaron said. "I would say that doing all the merit badges, even though it is a great commitment, is definitely rewarding in the end."



The entire Egbert family has been involved in Aaron, 17, and Joshua Egbert, 14, completing all merit badges available through the Boy Scouts of America. (Courtesy of Allyson Egbert)

According to Aaron and Joshua, their parents' dedication has been essential.

"My mom takes so much time out of her day to help others in Boy Scouts, especially me and Josh, because we've had to travel around doing a lot of merit badges — I bet she's really tired and exhausted from doing all that work, but I think she loved doing it," Aaron said.

"She once came on a 20-mile hike and a 150-mile bike ride with us. I

don't know how she did it, but she's like an iron lady. She's supported me in every way."

The boys have looked to their father as an example of how a Boy Scout should act and have learned many skills from both parents. Allyson Egbert said she has learned a great deal through the process as well.

"I think for me, there were a lot of things that I had never done before," Allyson Egbert said. "I would look at it and go, 'What in the world is this?' So it forced me to learn; I felt like I was in college again."

Although both her sons have now completed Scouts, Allyson Egbert said she will continue to participate in the program.

"I've learned through working with boys that this is very much a needed program," Allyson Egbert said. "It's extremely rewarding and such a positive thing for parents. ... I don't doubt that (my sons) can do anything."

Completing all the merit badges has been an experience the entire Egbert family will never forget, one that will stay with Aaron and Joshua forever.



Aaron completes the Citizenship in the Community merit badge. (Courtesy of Allyson Egbert)



Joshua completes the Citizenship in the Community merit badge. (Courtesy of Allyson Egbert)

"I believe that it will really help me as an adult because it's helped me to become more responsible," Aaron said. "Once being an adult and a father, I think those skills will be able to help me go out into the world and do a lot of different things I never thought I could do."

"The Boy Scouts is a really great program with all the skills it brings," Aaron said. "I learned that I can do hard things, even though they may be really challenging; I learned that I can accomplish anything I set my mind to."

Email: spetersen@deseretnews.com

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