



BETTENDORF

Boy Scout earns all available merit badges

Steven Martens | Posted: Friday, October 22, 2010 2:00 am

For Zac Greve, it all started with pets.

It was his first Boy Scout merit badge, requiring him to care for a pet and write about how he did it, read about his pet and teach his pet a trick.

“He taught the cat to retrieve,” his mother, Beth Greve, said, “and now he can’t stop it from retrieving.”

Zac hasn’t stopped, either.

Greve, an 18-year-old senior at Bettendorf High School and an Eagle Scout in Troop 82 in Bettendorf, has joined a select group of Boy Scouts who have earned every available merit badge — from American business to woodwork — which currently adds up to 129.

Greve said he was a Cub Scout when he was younger, then left Scouting for a while before returning at the end of his seventh-grade year.

He said looking through the wide variety merit badges presented him with a challenge.

“I thought, ‘Why not just get all of them?’” he said.

The Boy Scouts’ highest rank, Eagle Scout, requires 21 merit badges. Badges can be earned in a variety of fields, from traditional Scouting skills such as camping, first aid and emergency preparedness to specialized skills such as photography, dentistry and farm mechanics.

One badge introduced this year — geocaching, or the use of GPS navigation — is so new the badge hasn’t been released yet, but Greve already has completed the requirements. When the badge is released, he’ll have to find a place for it on his merit badge sash, which has had material added to it because it is designed to hold only 118 badges.

The Boy Scouts of America do not keep records of how many Scouts have earned every available merit badge, but Troy Pugh, who started a website dedicated to identifying Scouts who achieved the feat, puts the number of verified cases in the history of the organization at 128.

Pugh, an Ephrata, Wash., wealth manager who also earned every available merit badge as a Boy Scout, started www.meritbadgeknot.com two years ago in an effort to petition the Boy Scouts of America to create an award officially recognizing those who have earned all the available merit badges.

He said there about 10 more cases that are close to being verified and he thinks the actual number of Scouts who have earned every merit badge is likely two or possibly three times the current verified count of 128.

Pugh said considering how many Scouts there have been in the 100-year history of the organization, Greve is in an elite group.

Mike Meadows, director of the Illowa Council’s Kittan District, said he had not heard of any other Scouts in the local council who have equalled Greve’s accomplishment.

“It’s amazing,” Meadows said. “It’s a tremendous credit to him what he’s pulled off here.”

Some of the merit badges, such as fingerprinting, can be earned in an afternoon, but others have required considerably more work, Greve said.

It wasn’t easy to find someone who could communicate with him in Morse code and semaphore to earn the signaling badge. To earn his whitewater badge, he and his father went to Tennessee on a whitewater trip.

“Iowa’s just not known for its whitewater,” Beth Greve said.

Zac Greve said his least favorite was insect study because it required him to identify, mount and display 50 different insects. Soon after he earned the badge, the requirements were changed, so mounting and displaying insects is no longer required.

To earn the Eagle Scout rank, Scouts are required to plan and complete a community service project. Greve’s project was a floating dock at the Middle Park lagoon in Bettendorf.

Greve said earning one of his merit badges, computers, sparked such an interest that he now is planning to study computers in college and already is taking a course at Scott Community College.

Pugh said Greve will benefit from the wide variety of experiences he has had in earning his merit badges.

“Scouts who go through this and make this a goal of theirs are exposed to so many things that they would not be exposed to through other avenues,” Pugh said.

Beth Greve said her son has benefited from the assistance of Scout leaders who have volunteered their time and ordinary people who take the time to teach Scouts about their own particular areas of expertise.

“He has had an awful lot of help,” she said.