

HANNAH HOLMES



CELEBRATION RESIDENT EARN'S EVERY SCOUTING MERIT BADGE

For the first time in the one-hundred-and-ten-year history of the Boy Scouts of America, the first girl has earned all of the merit badges the program has to offer. To accomplish Eagle Rank a scout must earn 21 merit badges. However, fourteen-year-old Celebration resident Hannah Holmes earned 137, making her the first girl to ever do so.

Holmes began her journey a year ago when the Boy Scouts, now called Scouts BSA, began accepting girls into their ranks in February 2019, "I was so happy to be able to join and participate with my family," said Hannah.

Merit badges allow a scout to become knowledgeable in a wide-variety of skills and future career possibilities. A single merit badge can take anywhere from a few hours to several months to earn. Each merit badge has a pamphlet and worksheets, requires hours of real-world training and class work.

"To earn the welding merit badge, I had to weld metal," Hannah said. "In Scuba Diving, I had to earn my certification. I had to learn to sail, play the trumpet and water ski." January

There are merit badges for everything from Nature to Nuclear Science to Public Speaking to Programming. Hannah's first merit badge was Photography in February and her last was Whitewater in November.

During those 10 months, she and her family traveled all over the country attending BSA camps and classes to earn merit badges. Because she is home-schooled, she was able to travel with her family and do a number of the classes with her brother Harrison and sister Hailey.

"It was so great to have my two best friends doing merit badges right alongside me. I couldn't have done it without them."

As part of her journey, Hannah got to drive a car and a motorboat for the first time. She harvested her own honey. She built a robot, hiked a total of 100-miles, and even learned how to fly-fish.

Hannah says she earned her goal by following a weekly routine.

"I would pack my camping gear and we would drive or fly out to camp and work on merit badges the entire week. At night, I would attend online

merit badge classes until 10 o'clock and sleep in my tent. Once a camp week was over, I would go directly to the next camp and work on my prerequisites and worksheets on the trip."

She and her family traveled to almost a dozen states. Her favorite merit badges were Archery, Bird Study, and Moviemaking. Her least favorite? Backpacking, which included hiking thirty miles across 5 days while carrying more than 20 pounds worth of supplies in her backpack.

"If I had to do it all over again, I would. I was able to do incredible things I'd never done before and I got to meet amazing people across the country. The kindness of others really stood out to me. Almost all of my merit badge counselors were volunteers who gave their time to teach kids something new, and really embodied what it meant to be a scout."

Hannah hopes to encourage other girls and boys to be kind and embody the Scout Oath and Law as well. Hannah is currently working on earning her Eagle rank and obtaining her private pilot's license. To celebrate her accomplishment, Hannah says she has one thing in mind, "to sleep in." ●