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'Dedicated' central Pa. teen earns all 137 Boy Scout badges, a rare feat

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Eagle Scout Alexander LaVerdiere poses with all 137 Boy Scout merit badges. LaVerdiere joins the ranks of less than 400 confirmed Boy Scouts who have earned every badge since the organization was founded in 1910.

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By [Sean Adams | sadams@pennlive.com](mailto:sadams@pennlive.com)

Alexander LaVerdiere admits that he is, on occasion, labeled an overachiever.

"I've been called that by some of the guys in my troop," he said.

The 17-year-old graduated from Commonwealth Charter Academy a year early, for one thing. For another, he's reached the rank of Eagle Scout in the Boy Scouts of America. And over the past six years, he has managed to earn every single merit badge offered by the organization.

"On December 28, 2020, Eagle Scout Alex LaVerdiere of Troop 262 in Grantville, Pennsylvania, completed the requirements for the Horsemanship merit badge," read a press release from his troop. "With its completion, Alex had now earned all of the 137 merit badges offered by the Boy Scouts of America. Since its inception in 1910, the Boy Scouts of America has had approximately 350-500 Scouts earn every merit badge available."

For comparison: a scout needs only 21 to achieve the rank of Eagle, according to Doug Baker, Scoutmaster of Boy Troop 262.

"Completing all of the merit badges is really a unique thing to do, and quite an accomplishment," Baker said. "It's typical that there's more than 21 completed. But if somebody's getting up to 30, 35, that's starting to become unusual."

LaVerdiere's first badge was for Fingerprinting, completed at a weekend trip to Camp Hinds in Maine at the age of 11. Since then, it was a steady stream of achievements, from American Business to Woodwork. On average, he said, it took him roughly three weeks for each new badge - a process that required him to learn a new skill and demonstrate it under the supervision of a Boy Scout badge counselor.

The most challenging and time-consuming, he said, was the badge for Bugling. To meet the requirements for the badge, LaVerdiere had to learn to play 10 songs from a list of 15 options, play them for the troop and his counselor, and serve as the troop's bugler for three months.

"That was definitely the hardest one, because I had never played a brass instrument before," LaVerdiere said. "And it took about five or six months."

"It really is one of the most impressive merit badges, and it's really one that is taken the least," Baker said. "But if you ever had an opportunity to be at a scout camp, to hear a real bugle across camp is magical. There's a phrase in scouting -- someone

hears a call of the bugle, and they pick up the bugle. So, it keeps that tradition going."

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Among the highlights of LaVerdiere's badge collecting, he said, were the badges for Whitewater Rafting, Welding and Scuba Diving. He added that the opportunity to do new things and learn so many different subjects with his friends was the real motivation, and that "to earn a badge was an extra bonus."

"I definitely found a lot of fun," he said. "And it's easier to do basic things because of what the Boy Scouts taught me. By the time I got to a subject in school, I already learned something about it through the Boy Scouts."

And of course, LaVerdiere is glad to know the many wilderness survival skills that are part of the core of the program.

"The biggest part of surviving in the wilderness is staying calm," he said. "I would definitely think that the Boy Scouts has taught me enough to survive at least a couple of weeks in the wilderness."

LaVerdiere's quest to complete the full list of merit badges also earned him the title of Leke Mikemossit - "Dedicated Hard Working One" -as his Vigil name from the Sasquesahanough Lodge, as well as a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Boy Scouts for selling \$117,000 worth of popcorn as a fundraiser.

As for his next achievement, LaVerdiere is applying for colleges, and hoping to one day start his own business.

"I'd like to say how much I appreciate all the leaders and counselors that have helped me over the years to get me this far in scouting," he said. "I literally couldn't have done it without them."

Baker added that LaVerdiere's commitment was obvious from an early age, and that he rose to the challenges along the way, including, over the course of 2020, finishing his last remaining merit badges with the additional challenge of remote learning, videoconferencing and other COVID-19 precautions.

"He's a high energy, dedicated scout," Baker said. "He has proven himself to be a leader of distinction. He's a youth leader, and that's what scouting is all about - giving youths an opportunity to develop leadership skills as early on as possible. I think that's really what scouting is about -- coming upon your life's work. I won't be surprised if Alex picks one of those merit badges as the subject that [he] will do the rest of his life."