

Elkhart Boy Scout earned all 136 available merit badges



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ELKHART — The Boy Scouts of America requires scouts to earn 21 merit badges to attain the rank of Eagle.

About 5 percent of all scouts are able to attain this highest rank, [according to the BSA website](#), and most stop earning badges there.

Tyler Liponoga of Elkhart went past the organization's requirements and earned 136 merit badges in his scouting career. That's as many badges as it was possible to earn at the time he turned 18 in 2011.

In the century-long history of the BSA, only 185 scouts are known to have earned all the badges, according to [meritbadgeknot.com](#), which registers scouts who earned all badges available to them.

Liponoga, an Elkhart Central High School alumnus and now a sophomore at Indiana Tech studying computer networkings, attained the rank of Eagle Scout at age 15, years sooner than most scouts.

Scout Tyler Liponoga of Elkhart holds two sashes that contain all available merit badges that he earned during his work to complete his Eagle Scout ranking Wednesday, March 27, 2013. Liponoga is one of fewer than 200 Boy Scouts to earn all of the badges in the group's over 100 year history. (Truth Photo By Jennifer Shephard)

In addition to the required 21 badges, Eagle Scout candidates must complete a community service project.

The Eagle Project, as it is often called, is designed to teach organization and leadership skills and must be organized and led by the scout.

“Most kids (attain the rank of Eagle Scout) either at 14 or 15 or a few weeks before they turn 18, we’ve found,” Liponoga said. “After that, there’s not much left to do but earn more badges.”

“Once I had about 110 (badges), I was like, “OK, if I don’t get the rest I’ll be really mad at myself for the rest of my life,” he said. “Before that (point), it was a push from my dad.”

At the time he turned 18 and became ineligible to earn more badges, there were 133 badges available. Liponoga’s other three badges were part of a set of four historic badges re-released in 2010 to celebrate the BSA’s 100th year of scouting.

“I did about 10 badges in those last two weeks,” he said.

His father, James Liponoga, said his son was “basically a full-time scout,” devoting most of his time outside of school to earning more badges.

He was also involved in the Elkhart County 4-H, Elkhart Central High School Drama Club and took taekwondo classes.

“Two day after I turned 18 they released a bunch of new badges,” Liponoga said. “That was kind of annoying.”

The requirements to earn a merit badge vary from badge to badge. Some, such as the fingerprinting badge, Liponoga was able to finish in about an hour. Others had set timelines. The personal fitness badge requires the scout to practice a fitness routine consistently for six weeks.

Some of his favorites included scuba diving, climbing, wilderness survival and backpacking.

To earn a badge, scouts must meet with a merit badge counselor to certify they have completed the requirements. Counselors can specialize in one badge or several badges, Liponoga said. The counselor then sends the badge to the local BSA district for final approval.

“Merit badges (help) introduce you to subjects so you can explore them more later in life,” he said. “They show you the basics to get an understanding.”

Scouting had an impact on Liponoga’s life outside the skills he learned earning merit badges.

“I don’t think without scouting I would be the person I am today,” he said. “If I wasn’t a Boy Scout, I probably wouldn’t have the same friends I have today. My friends have helped shape who I am.”