

# Lee's Summit Journal

## Scout's badges of honor: All 141 of them

By RUSS PULLEY

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David Mumm and his mother, AnnaRose Mumm, celebrated his earning all the merit badges possible in Boy Scouts of America at a ceremony held Sunday at Aldersgate United Methodist Church in Lee's Summit. His mother had to sew a special merit badge sash to hold all of the 141 badges he earned. A normal sash is about half the width of this one. RUSS PULLEY



Any Boy Scout will tell you it can be tough to earn a merit badge. Earning 141 badges is a rare feat.

Backpacking requires a five-day trip, lugging food and gear, hiking at least 30 miles on foot. Life Saving requires diving to the bottom of a deep pool and bringing up a 10-pound weight. Cycling requires a series of rides, capped with a 50-mile jaunt.

Those are only snippets of what each badge requires.

On Sunday, David Mumm celebrated being one of fewer than 300 Scouts who have earned every merit badge possible in the Boy Scouts since the program started badges in 1911.

Physical Fitness requires months of record keeping and improvements to meet goals, and so does Personal Management, which Mumm said were his biggest personal challenges because of the length of time and details required.

Bugling was another challenge, said the member of Troop 262.

"I'm not super musically inclined," said Mumm, a student at Lee's Summit West High School. Animation, his last badge and the newest offered by the Boy Scouts, presented its own difficulties, because he had to reach out to a merit badge counselor in St. Louis to earn it.

They communicated by email. Merit badge counselors have expertise and skills in the badge the Scout is trying to earn. The counselors give Scouts guidance and review that they've completed the required work. The teen reached his landmark in February.

Mumm, 17, had already earned his Eagle rank, which requires advancing through other ranks, earning 21 badges and heading up a service project — no small tasks. Even the Eagle rank is reached by only a small percentage of boys who start Boy Scouts, said Lynn Houston, his former Scoutmaster, speaking at a celebration Sunday.

In 2015, of about 10,000 registered Scouts, only about 7.8 percent had attained Eagle in the Heart of America Council, which runs scouting in this area, said Scott Hess, advancement committee chairman for the Heart of America Council.

Houston said earning all possible merit badges was a goal Mumm mentioned when he first joined the troop. Thinking it unlikely, Houston said he gave it little thought.

To reach that goal, Mumm had to carefully plan and schedule his efforts through seasons, Scout camp and school activities.

"He has helped younger Scouts, and has worked on his own rank advancement and merit badges," Houston said.

James Freeman III, High Trail District representative, also has known Mumm through various Scout events, like Jamborees. He said that while young boys who enter Scouting might "plunge in like a belly flop," most never come close to Mumm's achievement because they become sidetracked by other activities.

Mumm also participates in football, pole vaulting and debate at Lee's Summit West High School. He's intent on studying history and law, and eventually maybe politics.

"David's like a Zen ninja: He quietly gets things done, power under control," Freeman said.

The troop on Sunday made Mumm a junior assistant scoutmaster in recognition of his accomplishments.

His mother said she made a point of teaching her son to plan and set goals.

"I'm very proud of him," AnnaRose Mumm said.

"I watched him grow a lot as he was calling up people he didn't know to work on the badges. Scouts can really get kids out of their shells" she said.

For her son, she said, there was no such thing as a free weekend, between Scouts, football, pole vaulting and debate.

She said that when her son was starting out in Scouting, they printed out pages and pages of merit badge requirements. One thing that helped spur him on, she said, was that he didn't have a video-game system, and getting one was a reward for earning badges.

Mumm earned a few extra badges because during the centennial year of Scouting, the organization offered four legacy badges that could be earned only during that year, and one badge that's been "retired."

Mumm's advice to younger Scouts?

"Definitely try to get your Eagle project and merit badges done before high school, because you'll be so busy with other activities," Mumm said.

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