

Andover Eagle Scout joins exclusive club after earning every merit badge - 139 in all

By **Camilo Fonseca** Globe Staff, Updated January 29, 2025, 8:53 a.m.



Jimmy Poirier poses for a portrait at his home in Andover. An Eagle Scout, Poirier has earned 139 merit badges, a remarkable achievement. BRETT PHELPS/GLOBE STAFF

An Andover Eagle Scout has earned every available merit badge — a rare accomplishment that, in over a century of scouting in the United States, has been achieved by only a few hundred people.

Jimmy Poirier, 18, managed to earn 139 merit badges as a member of Scouting Troop 79, scouting officials confirmed. His last merit badge, for bugling, was earned in December, just days before the deadline of his 18th birthday.

It's a remarkable feat given that only 21 merit badges are required to earn the rank of Eagle Scout — itself a distinction only attained by 4 to 6 percent of all scouts.

“It's really inspirational,” said John Judge, [a local scouting executive](#) whose council includes Poirier's Troop 79. “To be honest with you, it's the first time I've heard of it — even through the years — in the Boston area.”

Poirier, a senior honors student at Essex Agricultural & Technical School in Danvers, said he didn't set out to earn every merit badge. But after passing the time during the COVID-19 pandemic by attending virtual merit badge classes, he realized he'd already earned nearly 100.

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“Last summer, I was like, ‘Since I have so many badges, why don't I just get them all?’” he said.

Since the Boy Scouts of America was established in 1910, fewer than 600 scouts have earned every available merit badge, according to an unofficial database maintained by [Merit Badge Knot.com](#). Of those, only four were from Massachusetts, [the most recent one being Greg Beagan of North Attleborough in 2019](#).

Not all those scouts earned the same number of merit badges, however, since dozens of new ones have been added over the course of the past century.

In fact, Poirier holds the even-rarer distinction of earning more merit badges than are currently available. Officially, Scouting offers 138 merit badges as of 2024, but Poirier earned his Medicine merit badge a year before it was discontinued and replaced in 2021. He also earned the replacement badge, now called Health Care Professions, four years later.

For Poirier, the process wasn't just a matter of earning one badge after another. Because several badges have requirements that take months to complete, he was often juggling work on dozens of badges at a time.

"I feel like that gave me a lot of practice with different scheduling and planning of activities," he said, "having to tackle multiple things at once."

Outside of scouting, Poirier has volunteered at soup kitchens and other local organizations, such as the Andover Village Improvement Society, a conservation group. He said he hopes to pursue a degree in environmental science or forestry, possibly at the University of Vermont or the University of Maine.

He said his desire to become a prescribed burn specialist — protecting ecosystems from wildfire through small, controlled burns — stems from his experience at Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico, where he saw [the devastation caused by wildfires firsthand](#).

"Nothing was there, all the trees were charred," he said. "Everything was dead. One of the people told us that it would take upwards of 50 years for the entire forest to fully regrow.

That was really eye-opening.”

No surprise that Forestry was one of Poirier’s favorite merit badges to earn. His least favorite? Climbing. Poirier admits that, at one point, he got stuck high up in a tree and was afraid to come down.

But eventually he earned all 139, thanks to his perseverance and the support of his friends, family, and mentors, he said.

“You put your mind on something, you can get it,” he said. “I didn’t think I’d ever be able to get this accomplishment, but it took a lot of dedication, took countless hours, and took a lot of people involved in helping me.”

The Scouting movement has undergone significant changes in recent years. The national organization has long been dogged by sexual abuse claims, many of them decades old, from former scouts; it exited [a highly-publicized bankruptcy](#) in 2023 after approving the creation of a \$2.4 billion victims compensation fund.

The organization has since relaxed its membership restrictions, and began allowing girls to participate alongside boys in 2019. The Boy Scouts will officially change its name to Scouting America later this year.

Poirier, who plans to remain active in Scouting as an adult volunteer, said he hopes his accomplishment will encourage other young people to join — or take on other challenges that require stepping outside their comfort zone.

“A lot of these badges, I had to conquer fear,” he said. “I had to conquer difficulties, either with the counselors or [with the] circumstances. But I feel like it’s made me a better person.”

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