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All Of Them

Local Scout earns every merit badge

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On Saturday, Sept. 5, at age 15, Hunter Proctor of Boy Scouts of America Chief Cornplanter Council Troop 8 Warren earned a merit badge for scuba diving.

It was the latest in a long line of badges Proctor has earned over the past four years.

More significantly, it was the last.

With the completion of the requirements for the scuba badge, Proctor has earned every merit badge available to Boy Scouts.

In the 100-year history of the Boy Scouts of America, out of more than 50 million scouts, only about 125 have been confirmed as having earned every merit badge available to them.

"It's a great feeling," Proctor said. "I'm very honored to be one."

There is a list of 16 more at meritbadgeknot.com being investigated for confirmation.

Proctor is on that list, but he has the necessary documentation to get through the process.

He has a blue card for each badge showing when and where he earned it and bearing a merit badge counselor's signature.

Along the way, Proctor earned badges from archaeology, archery, and architecture, to whitewater, wilderness survival, and wood carving.

While many scouts said bugling badge was among the toughest, Proctor enjoyed earning that badge. "I got to work with Mr. (Dan) Wolboldt," he said. "He's one of my favorite people in scouting."

The oft-repeated advice Proctor got from Wolboldt was to "keep my foot down on the gas pedal in scouting and take advantage of everything it has to offer."

Proctor has to move fast just to find time for all his activities. He is a student at Youngsville High School and participates in cross country, wrestling, and track. "I have a tight schedule, but it works," he said.

The badges take time.

Archery took Proctor about half-an-hour. Dog care took him more than a year. "Most of them take about a week," he said.

He listed the nuclear science badge as the one that people would find surprising and the space exploration badge as his career inspiration. "I hope someday to be an astronaut or teach astronomy," Proctor said.

Four historic badges - carpentry, pathfinding, signaling, and tracking - were reintroduced this year in honor of the 100th anniversary of the Boy Scouts.

Those badges now adorn Proctor's merit badge sash.

That sash, about six feet of it, ran out of space well before he ran out of badges to put on it.

"I'll have to make an extension," he said.

The badges, round patches about an inch in diameter, aren't heavy, but they add up.

"The more merit badges you get, the heavier it gets," he said. "You want it heavy."

They add up psychologically, too.

"Every time I put on my sash with all these badges it gives me a burst of energy," he said.

Proctor started putting badges on that sash shortly after joining the Boy Scouts at age 11.

He earned his first badge - weather - on Feb. 18, 2006. He kept working, filling the requirements for 127 more badges in less than five years before heading to Kinzua Beach for three days of scuba training.

Article Photos



Photo by Brian Ferry
No more space
Merit badges occupy every square inch of
Hunter Proctor's sash.

He earned badges with such regularity that his first counselor dubbed him a "merit badge machine" and a woman associated with another troop told him, "I have a feeling that someday I'm going to read about you and all the merit badges you have earned."

Early on, Proctor set a nice, round number as a goal. "I said I was going to get 100 merit badges."

When he was halfway to that goal, he set the bar even higher. "When I got 50 or 60 I said I'm going to get them all," Proctor said.

"I'm glad he reached his goal," Hunter's father, John, who is Troop 8 assistant scoutmaster, said. "I'm proud of him."

Along with support and encouragement from family, friends, fellow scouts and scout leaders, Proctor had expert help. Dallin Manning, a scout in Utah who earned the knot for completing all the merit badges in 2006, provided encouragement and advice as Proctor neared his goal.

Most scouts don't come close to earning all the badges.

At a week of scout camp, many scouts earn a handful, according to John Proctor. The average scout earns between 30 and 40 badges before he turns 18.

Even Eagle Scouts, the Boy Scouts' highest honor, only have to accumulate 21 badges: any nine in addition to 12 required badges. They must also complete a community service project.

Proctor, who became an Eagle Scout almost two years ago shortly after his 14th birthday, easily had the required badges. For his project, he constructed new dugouts for a girls' softball field in Youngsville.

Between rising to the rank of Eagle Scout at 14 and joining the elite ranks of those who have earned all the merit badges, Proctor is having an impact on the nation's oldest Boy Scout Council.

"He's changed the council with what he's done," John Proctor said.

This year, the council had 26 candidates for Order of the Arrow, the organization's honor society, of which Hunter is lodge chief. The average candidate class includes five or six members.

"I can already see that more kids are coming," he said.

With no merit badges to earn, at least for now, Proctor plans to help others work to meet their goals. "I'm proud of him staying in scouting and helping kids," John Proctor said.

But, there will be more badges. A new badge - robotics - is coming out for 2011.

"It sounds like a cool merit badge," Proctor said. "You get to work with robots."

If there are more added before he turns 18, he'll work to keep his perfect record intact.

"If they come out with more, I look forward to it," he said. "Any one that they throw at me."

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