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Riverton Boy Scout enters exclusive club with 132nd merit badge

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The State Journal-Register

Posted Jul 15, 2012 @ 10:15 PM

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RIVERTON — Boy Scouts earn **merit badges** in everything from first-aid to camping fitness.

Robert Raycraft, 18, has taken it a step further by earning rare badges in areas such as fishing and entrepreneurship. With a total of 132 merit badges, he has entered an exclusive club of Boy Scouts.

“**Bugling** is pretty rare,” said Raycraft, a recent graduate of Riverton High School and a member of Troop 46 in Riverton. “That was personally my hardest.”

He earned his 132nd badge in April.

“We drove all over the country to get those badges,” said Tina Raycraft, Robert’s mother.

Boy Scouts typically can earn a maximum of 128 merit badges. However, Raycraft earned his 132nd in 2010, when the Boy Scouts of America celebrated its 100th anniversary.

Raycraft will be recognized for his accomplishments, along with a handful of other Scouts from Illinois, by Illinois Comptroller Judy Baar Topinka on Scout Day, Aug. 13, at the Illinois State Fair.

“(The recognition) puts it into perspective what a big accomplishment it is,” Raycraft said.

His father helped him become a Scout.

When Raycraft was young, his father talked about how many people he met and all of the activities he participated in as a Scout.

“When we moved here, it was something his dad always talked about,” Tina Raycraft said. “He was always in Boy Scouts and always did a lot with the Scouts.”

Raycraft earned enough merit badges to become an Eagle Scout at age 15.

“It only takes 21 badges to become an Eagle Scout,” Raycraft said. “I was not going to be like the other kids who became an Eagle Scout when I was 12 or 13 years old. You haven’t learned enough yet to be mature enough.”

Even though Raycraft is about to enter Millikin University this fall, he still plans to be active with the Scouts.

“It will be a little weird not being as active,” Raycraft said. “I’m going to try my best, though, to be at as many meetings as I can.”

He said all of the merit-badge work has been worth it because of the people he has met and the experiences he has had.

“You get to meet a lot of new people as a Boy Scout,” Raycraft said. “I learned a lot of things I never would have with my old Scout. And you get to go camping, go to Six Flags, and I got to go to Virginia.”

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