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# This Boy Has Merit!

Boy Scout With Troop 462 in Washington Earns Every Merit Badge — 141 of Them

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## Evan Searcy Displays His 141 Merit Badges

Eagle Scout Evan Searcy displays some of the 141 merit badges he earned as a Boy Scout with Troop 462 sponsored by V.F.W. Post 2661, Washington. He has earned every merit badge possible, plus a few that have since been discontinued. Missourian Photos.

Posted: Wednesday, May 18, 2016 12:30 am

By Karen Cernich, Feature Writer

Eagle Scout Evan Searcy of Troop 462 sponsored by V.F.W. Post 2661 in Washington can still remember when he was a new Cub Scout at his first meeting and flipping through the Scout book looking at all of the merit badges available to earn. He must have only been 6 years old, but he made a decision that day to earn every last one of them.

"I thought it would be awesome if I could get all of them. It was like a to-do list," said Searcy, who is now 18 and a senior at Washington High School.

Done! In March, Searcy earned his 141st merit badge, completing the list.

He is the first Scout in Franklin County to do so. The Boy Scout Council of Greater St. Louis has no record of anyone else before him, said Eric Searcy, Evan's father and scoutmaster of Troop 462.

The family's research finds that there are around 284 Boy Scouts from across the country who have earned every merit badge that was available by the time they aged-out of the program. Currently there are 136 merit badges offered.

The number of merit badges offered changes regularly, as badges are removed for lack of interest or added because of new interests, Eric Searcy explained.

"One badge Evan earned was computers, which has since been discontinued. It was replaced with digital technology, so Evan earned that one too," his father noted.

All together Evan's 141 merit badges represent more than six years' worth of work. An individual badge

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represents anywhere from four hours' to several weeks' worth of work.

The small, round badges are sewn in a neat and orderly pattern on the front and back of two uniform sashes. Each is bright and colorful with an image that represents the skill that was learned.

**Merit Badges Teach Leadership**

Boys are around 10 or 12 years old when they reach the rank of Life Scout and can begin working on merit badges. To earn a merit badge, a Scout must complete a list of requirements within an area of study and then demonstrate to an approved counselor that he has completed all work involved for the requirements.

Finding a counselor, or person knowledgeable about the skill, is up to the Scout, although there is a list of names available to help them get started. Still, it is the Scout's responsibility to contact the counselor and make the necessary arrangements.

A big part of the merit badge program is about teaching boys how to be leaders, Eric Searcy pointed out.

"Each merit badge is teaching them a skill or the steps needed to achieve a skill, but the bigger picture purpose is to teach leadership, communication and how to speak for themselves," he said. "When they call (the counselor) it's like an interview. It's a learning experience."

**Some of His Favorites**

Evan said he earned a number of his merit badges during summer camps at S bar F Scout Ranch in Farmington. Others were more involved and required a good amount of planning.

Swimming was the first merit badge Evan earned. Journalism was the last.

The journalism badge required him to learn about all of the steps that go into creating a newspaper, from getting the facts and writing the stories to the actual printing of the paper and the management of it.

While it's hard to pick a favorite badge, Evan said there are a number of them that he really enjoyed, like scuba diving, orienteering and water sports.

"That one was fun because that was basically learning how to water ski," Evan remarked.

Some of the badges came with added expenses, such as taking a scuba certification class — Evan paid for that himself with money he earned working a part-time job, his father noted.

For a few badges, like bugling, it was difficult to find a counselor to help, said Evan.

In addition to learning to play the bugle, the badge required he serve as a bugler for two or three months, at Scouts camps and such.

Pioneering was a fun badge to work on for Evan. He worked on it at S bar F camp with other Scouts who were earning the same badge.

"That is basically lashing skills and knot tying. Making bridges, towers . . . for that final requirement we had to make a project, and we made a giant monkey bridge," he said. "That exposed me to a lot more knots in the Boy Scout book than the basic ones."


Evan worked on the white water and kayaking badges at the same time since the requirements were so similar.

Drafting was another fun one for him. This was before he took a drafting class in high school.

"That's what my dad does for a living, so I knew a little, but I learned more of the rules and details. I'm going into engineering, so there is a little bit of drafting in that," said Evan.

He earned the robotics badge — where they build and program a Lego robot to complete a task — during a Merit Badge University event where Scouts have the opportunity to choose from a list of merit badges that they complete in a single day.


For the computer programming badge, Evan was able to help teach a little as he was earning it since he had already taken a class on it in high school.



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The archaeology badge offered a choice of study, either American Indians or the settlers.

"I studied the natural history of the Indians, what you would find at an Indian archaeological site," said Evan. "We had a mock dig, and I helped set that up. We had a little skeleton buried amongst other artifacts . . . we buried things strategically so we could explain why you found things in the order that you did."

The shotgun shooting badge is one that Evan came close to having to repeat. He worked on it at summer camp, and the Scouts didn't work on it all at once, but rather by taking 15 shots per day.

"You have to get 25 out of 50 shots to earn the badge . . . and on the last day I was pretty close. My last shot was the exact one I needed," he said.

Probably the hardest badge for Evan to earn was cycling. More than just physical exertion, it required planning. The badge required he take several bike rides of different lengths all totaling 250 miles, so he needed to plan out when he could take them since he was working on it during the school year.

"They were like 5, 10, 15 . . . For the last one you have to ride 50 miles and do it within eight hours," said Evan. "The counselor actually rode with us for the 50-mile ride . . . I was working on it before winter set in, and I had to do it as soon as the weather was good this year."

Evan worked on accomplishing the badges at a steady pace, just whenever he could, but two years ago he began to strategize a plan to achieve his goal. For example, he needed to save up his money to be able to afford the scuba diving class he was required to take.

**Inspiring Others**

Looking over his two uniform sashes filled with badges, Evan feels a strong sense of accomplishment and satisfaction in achieving the goal he set for himself all those years ago.

"The reward of completing a long task and journey is a really good feeling once you get to the end and you get to look back at what you've done, and see how far you have come," he said.

Evan, who is now serving as a leader and Assistant Scoutmaster for Troop 462 since he turned 18 and can no longer be a Boy Scout, doesn't know what he'll do with his sashes.

He will likely hang them on the wall or somehow display them.

Evan may have been the first Boy Scout in Franklin County credited with earning all possible merit badges, but he likely won't be the only one for long. There is a Scout in Cuba who only needs to earn three more badges to complete the list, and Evan's own brother with Troop 462 and a Scout in Troop 439 at St. Francis Borgia each have more than 100 of the current 136 badges.

Along the way as Evan was earning his merit badges, his fellow Scouts in Troop 462 were cheering him on, said Eric Searcy.

"At every court of honor, they were always excited to hear how many more he had earned," he said.

From the time he joined Cub Scouts and later Boy Scouts, Evan liked attending meetings where, when he was young, he could learn from the older Scouts, and when he grew older, he could be a role model and help teach the younger ones.

Now as a leader, his experience has come full circle.

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