



## Student Spotlight: Alex Teemsma

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When Alex Teemsma advanced to the rank of Eagle Scout at age 13, he had already earned about half of all the merit badges that the Boy Scouts offered.

So Alex decided then he wanted to earn all 121 badges offered by the Boy Scouts, from American business to woodwork.

“I was very keen on trying to knock everything out in one fell swoop,” said Alex, 17, of Santee, a graduate of West Hills High School.

Last week, just before he left for Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, Alex achieved his goal. He earned his final merit badge for backpacking by climbing Mount Whitney in Central California, at more than 14,500 feet the highest summit in the contiguous United States.

Matt Read, a La Mesa software engineer who was Alex's merit badge counselor, said that from the 100 Scouts he has mentored, none but Alex has earned all of the offered merit badges.

Read said he has seen a change in Alex as he worked on the badges over the years.

“When he came to me six years ago to work on his first merit badge, you could tell he was inexperienced and very immature. Because he had nothing else to do in life, that's what he was doing,” Read said. “Six years later, it's amazing how focused he is and how mature.”

Alex said he had many novel experiences while earning his badges. He flew an experimental aircraft for his aviation badge, biked 50 miles for his cycling badge and fired model rockets for his space exploration badge.

He said working toward the badges also helped focus his career goals. He learned, for example, that he wasn't particularly interested in architecture, but found that he enjoyed graphic arts.

At BYU, he is planning to major in communications, with an emphasis on broadcast journalism.

And he still has another goal in Scouting. Alex has earned 14 Eagle palms, awarded to Scouts who have received merit badges and shown leadership ability, but he still wants to earn one more.

– *Anne Krueger*

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