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TOP STORY

Lone Star: Eagle Scout Jason Teh-Mitchell continues to serve

By Christina Fuoco-Karasinski, Argonaut Executive Editor

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Teh-Mitchell earned his Eagle Scout rank as a “lone scout” in Feb. 13, 2021, at age 14.

(Chris Mortenson/ Staff)

Becoming an Eagle Scout is a rare accomplishment. Only about 6% of the 2.5 million registered scouts per year achieve that rank.

Jason Teh-Mitchell earned his Eagle Scout rank as a “lone scout” on Feb. 13, 2021, at age 14. Four years later, Teh-Mitchell continues to serve. Teh-Mitchell said he wants his story told because he is neurodivergent.

“I started as a lone scout because I’m on the spectrum and tested ahead of my age,” said Teh-Mitchell, who was not part of a formal troop. “None of the nearby troops were ready to have someone like me join them when I turned 10 going into sixth grade.”

In 2018, during a Boy Scout Merit Badge session at Cabrillo Youth Center in San Pedro, Teh-Mitchell met Paul Pushkar of the Los Angeles Harbor Dragon Boat Club.

They discussed starting an all-Scout youth dragon boat racing team and a venturing crew for boys and girls between ages 14 to 21. Pushkar told Teh-Mitchell they could revisit it when he turned 14.

Unexpectedly, Pushkar died. So, the world’s first all-Scout youth dragon boat racing team, Jason and the Dragonauts, debuted with coach, mentor and Eagle Scout Todd Gaydowski of the Los Angeles Harbor Dragon Boat Club at the Santa Fe Dam in October 2021. It finished with a silver medal.

Five Scout-members of the Jason and the Dragonauts racing team formed the Venturing Crew Dragonauts Crew 333 for youth ages 13 to 21 who enjoy STEM-based Outdoor Aquatics High Adventures, including dragon boat racing.

Any youth who is a currently registered member of a Cub Scout Pack, a Scouting America Troop, a Sea Scout Ship and a Venturing Crew may join the medal-winning Jason and the Dragonauts to participate in a race. Jason and the Dragonauts races three to four times a year, including March in Marina Del Rey, June in Castaic, July in Long Beach, and Irwindale in October.

Despite the torrential rains this spring, Jason and the Dragonauts finished in third at Marina del Rey. Next up is the Castaic Lake Dragon Boat Festival from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, June 1, at its lower lagoon, 32132 Castaic Lake Drive, Castaic.

Rite of passage

Teh-Mitchell became interested in joining the Boy Scouts after being part of a Doritos commercial.

“I thought to myself that wearing the uniform was pretty cool, then I learned that there was an actual real thing that young people could do,” said Teh-Mitchell.

“The idea of camping out in the woods when I was younger was interesting to me, so I pitched the idea to my mother.” After a few conversations with nearby scout units, Teh-Mitchell joined the worldwide scouting movement as a “lone scout.”

Tested to have a “resting IQ” of 137, Teh-Mitchell was slated to skip fifth grade for sixth grade at age 9 but instead chose to “repeat” fifth grade at Inspire Charter School until he was EQ-ready (emotional quotient).

“Jason doesn’t pick up on social cues,” his mom Y-Vonn said. “He has very high empathy. When other people are stressed, he gets double stressed. He processes it out loud...which can be both unnerving and annoying to neurotypical people within sight and sound.”

Teh-Mitchell said it’s uncommon to run into a “lone scout.”

“I did this mostly because I wanted to learn how to do things myself,” he said. He completed several of his advancements alongside Beverly Hills Troop 33, Glendale Troop 118 and Walnut Troop 789 over the years.

Scouts are unranked when they join the BSA. By completing certain requirements over time, they will move up in ranks: Scout, Tenderfoot, Second Class, First Class, Star, Life and Eagle.

“Just because you’re a low rank, it doesn’t necessarily mean you know less than your peers,” Teh-Mitchell said.

When Teh-Mitchell reached the Eagle Scout rank, he had earned 128 of 139 merit badges plus nine of 10 Nova STEM Awards.



Teh-Mitchell completed several of his advancements alongside troops 33 and 118 while unranked, and later alongside Troop 789 after ranking.

(Chris Mortenson/ Staff)

Merit badges are studies that scouts can earn while working with a professional. Through these merit badges, scouts can then dive into a career if one subject is interesting. After earning the welding and SCUBA diving merit badges, Teh-Mitchell became interested in an underwater welding career.

“The merit badge program helped me figure out my career path. I plan to be an underwater welder,” he said. “Being an Eagle Scout helped me gain the project management skills to continue scouting and preparing me for a technical skills career.”

He also earned the Hornaday Badge for Conservation Service working with the Friends of Ballona. Less than 1,100 scouts in Scouting America’s 114 years have earned this award before it was renamed as the Distinguished Conservation Service Award in 2021.

“The Hornaday Badge is like an Olympic medal,” he said. “It’s like doing an Eagle Scout project two times over.”

Some of his scouting highlights include a Joshua Tree Campout with Glendale Troop 118, Cycling Adventures with Walnut Troop 789, summer camping with Beverly Hills Troop 33, going to Summit Bechtel on an Order of the Arrow Summit Experience where he helped build a trail at the New River Gorge National Park in West Virginia, and attending the World Scout Jamboree in South Korea as a member of Troop 8, USA Contingent.

“I traveled mostly around California, Arizona and Nevada for merit badges with other scouts from all over the place,” Teh-Mitchell said.

Today, he has earned all the merit badges. His last was the Surveying badge, for which he surveyed land near his local library. However, it included “tedious math,” like trigonometry. Teh-Mitchell shared he isn’t the biggest fan of math.

“It’s the study of not allowing mistakes,” he said. “And considering that we are humans, we are bound to make mistakes.”

Scouts wear their merit badges on their sashes. They add 2 to 3 pounds to the sash, but scouts are allowed to choose their top six to wear on their long-sleeve uniforms. That way, they don’t have to carry their sash around.

To find out more about Scouting

Visit beascout.org. To follow Jason Teh-Michelle, visit facebook.com/dragonauts333, or [@lonescoutjason](https://instagram.com/@lonescoutjason) on Instagram.