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DAILY SOUTHTOWN

Andrew High grad departs for college having earned 140 Scout merit badges, which is all of them

By Ginger Brashinger
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Tinley Park resident John Ucha, 18, stands on the stairs of the caboose at the Tinley Park Park Library which he refurbished as part of his Eagle Scout project. (Ginger Brashinger / Daily Southtown)

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At a time of life when many high school graduates are looking at new challenges, Tinley Park teen John Ucha, 18, will begin his college experience at DePaul University with a number of impressive accomplishments already behind him.

140 of them, to be exact.

Attaining the rank of Eagle Scout in Troop 380 was an achievement that placed Ucha in an elite group of Scouts. But it is another accomplishment, less frequently achieved, that places Ucha in an even rarer group: He has earned every merit badge.

As a 10-year-old scout who hadn't yet earned his first rank, Ucha set a lofty goal to earn every badge available to him in Boy Scouts.

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“The one thing that made my mind up,” Ucha said, was hearing one of the older scouts say he wished he had earned more badges when he had the chance.

“I didn’t want to regret not doing any more merit badges because I was, like, lazy,” Ucha said.



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Ucha’s mother Rose, who said “overall it’s been a wonderful experience,” has been actively involved in several roles with Troop 380 and has participated in many of her son’s Scouting activities.

Ucha said his sister Julie, 21, also supported him and participated in some of the activities.

Ucha said his father Joe “would look for merit badge opportunities” that often led them out of state for experiences he might otherwise never have had.



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“It’s been more of a team effort than just me,” Ucha said.

As part of the “team,” Ucha’s long-time scoutmaster, John Connelly, sees Ucha as one of the older Scouts now paying it forward.

Connelly said all Scouts in their troop who earn the rank of Eagle Scout are told they “represent this distinctive group,” but many “drift away” from Scouting. Up Next - Top Videos: - Bridgewater co-investment chief expect... Ad 1 of 1 (200)

Ucha was different, Connelly said, “staying involved in the troop until he aged out at 18.”

“After John became an Eagle Scout about two years ago, he continued to participate in Scouting activities, exhibiting leadership and mentoring the younger scouts,” Connelly said. “Ucha also volunteered at a week-long day camp for Cub Scouts.”

As Ucha begins his studies at DePaul focusing on User Experience Design and Graphic Design, he plans to continue his involvement with Scouting.

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