

Local scout earns every merit badge possible



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PROVO -- Chris Wilkinson of Provo has done it all and he's only 17.

Wilkinson has gone scuba diving at the crater in Midway, seen firsthand how stealth technology is used for airplanes and missiles. He's learned to play the bugle, learned about the railroad, done some cooking and learned about citizenship. He's earned every scouting badge that is available to a Boy Scout.

Wilkinson, a junior at Timpview High School, didn't start out planning to earn every merit badge. As a matter of fact his only goal at first was to beat out his older brothers. He explained that his first goal was to earn 31 badges because his brother had earned 30 but after he started earning the badges he found he liked learning about the many topics that the badges cover and started working to earn more than just 31.

"I just like it because it was like 134 different careers you are experimenting with. It is like internships but with shorter periods so you just get a taste of 134 different career opportunities," he said.

Wilkinson's favorite was the scuba diving merit badge while the hardest one for him to earn was bugling. He had never played a brass instrument before and had to learn all the techniques that come with playing a horn. The one that took the longest was signaling, a special merit badge brought back during the 100-year anniversary of Boy Scouts in 2010. Wilkinson had to learn Morse code and semaphore to be awarded the badge. He said it took some time to get down the different avenues for communicating a message.

The achievement puts Wilkinson in a unique category of young men. While about 7 percent of Boy Scouts earned the rank of Eagle Scout in 2012, it is not a far stretch that many in that group never go on to earn the rest of the badges available.

"It happens, but it is pretty rare," John Gailey of the Utah National Parks Council said. "The last one that did it was probably three years ago."

Gailey said the council doesn't keep a record of how many scouts have earned all the merit badges available. He did note that he has only heard of the feat being accomplished four times in the last seven years.

What is probably most remarkable about Wilkinson's accomplishment is he did it all on his own. Many in scouts know that behind many Eagle Scouts is a motivating parent

urging the boy along to earn the scouting award. In Wilkinson's case he decided on his own to earn all the badges.

"I'm proud of the kid, he's pulled it off," said Rodney Wilkinson, his father and fellow Eagle Scout. "He's done this all on his own. We haven't pushed him on it."

Rodney Wilkinson said he admired his son's accomplishment and that he believes his son can do anything if he puts his mind to it. He also praised the scouting program and said he hopes every person involved in scouting takes advantage of it like his son has. He said he hopes Chris's experience will inspire other scouts to keep going after they earn their Eagle.

As for Chris, he isn't done even though he's picked up all the merit badges available. The 17-year-old has set his sights on the William T. Hornaday Award, a top scouting award created to challenge Americans to work constructively for wildlife conservation and habitat protection. He is raising funds to work toward the award. Those interested in helping him in the effort can learn more at www.millionhub.com