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Boy Scout earns them all

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By MARY ANN HELLINGHAUSEN | 0 comments

Many told him he could never do it, but Jonathan Hanson didn't listen.

Hanson, 17, has accomplished a rare feat by earning all 129 merit badges offered by the Boy Scouts of America in its 100-year history.

He joins 129 other Scouts verified to have earned all of the badges available at the time they were in scouting, according to www.meritbadgeknot.com.

That number can vary depending on the year. In 1928, for example, 80 merits were available.

Only three other Scouts in the Southeast Area Council's 84 years have achieved all badges available — one in The Woodlands and two brothers in Spring.

Hanson, who lives in Clear Lake's Northfork subdivision and is home schooled by his parents, David and Michelle, thought he had completed his goal after earning 121 merits last January.

Michelle, thought he had completed his goal after earning 121 merits last January.

Then he discovered that Boy Scouts had added eight new merits this year, four of which are "historical" merit badges brought back to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Boy Scouts and available only during 2010.

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Hanson was determined to earn those as well. "I just decided, why don't I go for all of them," he said.

He also was inspired by his three older sisters, who each earned all the Girl Scout merit badges offered. One of those sisters, Megan Hutson, now teaches math at Clear Lake High School.

Tic-Tack-Toe

One of the added 2010 merits turned out to be Hanson's favorite. "SCUBA was a lot of fun," he said, remembering playing Tic-Tack-Toe in the sand on the ocean floor at National High Adventure Sea Base off the Florida Keys.

That merit earned Hanson the "Triple Crown" award for going to all three of the Boy Scout High Adventure Camps.

His most challenging merit also involved water — and a trip to the emergency room. "When I was water skiing, I sliced my foot open," he said.

"I've never had the greatest balance," said the teen, who is 6 feet 6 inches tall. He managed to complete the merit the following summer, even learning to slalom on one ski.

Space rider

Hanson earned the rank of Eagle Scout at the age of 13 after leading a team of fellow scouts to build a 12-foot-long Formica-topped counter with shelves underneath for Interfaith Caring Ministries.

Many assumed he would quit Boy Scouts at that point, but he didn't give up his merit badge goal.

On Sept. 7, Hanson earned his final Boy Scout merit badge, "Inventing," and he was honored this week during Troop 869's Court of Honor.

"I love having a teen-age Boy Scout in the house," said his mother, Michelle. "I've gained a boy who knows how to fix things," ticking off the fence, plumbing and motor problems her son has repaired for her.

The wide variety of skills he has learned through merits "has really shown me what I would like to do career-wise," Hanson said.

Blacksmithing is something he discovered he liked doing, but he has decided on electrical engineering is a more realistic career path and he hopes to pursue that goal at Texas A&M after earning basic credits at San Jacinto College.

Ultimately, he hopes to go into space, which he realizes is an extra challenge for someone his height. "But if I built the space ship, I'd build it taller. I don't care so much how I get there. I just plan to go," he said.

Troop 869 is a member of the Sam Houston Area Council and meets at the Clear Lake Presbyterian Church, 1511 El Dorado Blvd, Houston, Tuesday nights.

For more information on the troop, as well as links for additional information regarding the Boy Scouts of America, visit the troop's Web site at <http://troop869.com>.

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