

The Express

Grandson of Mill Hall couple earns every Boy Scout badge available



PHOTO PROVIDED Colin Hill, right, and Lance Locher shake hands at the Court of Honor for Venture Crew 22.

MILL HALL — Eagle Scout Colin Hill, 16, grandson of James and Suzanne Hill of Mill Hall, recently distinguished himself from over

120 million other scouts over the 108-year history of the Boy Scouts of America.

The young man became the 364th scout in the country to earn every merit badge available.

Colin is the son of Patrick and Jill-Marie Hill of Berwick, nephew of Jamyn Hill Lamey of Lock Haven and Tim Hill of Port Matilda. His father Pat was raised in Lock Haven and graduated from Lock Haven University in 1993.

For those starting their scouting journey, how can they do their best if they don't know what the accomplishment looks like or realize what goals they can set?

Not every boy who joins a Boy Scout troop earns the Eagle Scout rank; only four percent nationwide of all Boy Scouts do so. This represents more than two million Boy Scouts who have earned the distinguished Eagle Rank since 1912.



PHOTOS PROVIDED Colin Hill, center, is flanked by Scoutmasters Denny Peters, left, and Randy Kukorlo.

Out of those two million youth less than 400 have rigorously maximized their scouting experience and through years of dedication complete all available merit badges. According to meritbadgeknot.com, out of the 364 scouts who completed all merit badges during their scouting tenure, just 68 young men have completed all 137 currently offered by the BSA.

One of those nationwide youth achievers is Colin Hill, a junior at Berwick Area High School.

Colin started his scouting experience as a Bobcat in Cub Scouts at age 6. One month before his 17th birthday, Hill was recognized by Venture Crew 22 and Troop 22 of Columbia-Montour Council #504, BSA, for earning all active badges plus two additional badges

now considered discontinued (Computers and Cinematography that were completed earlier in his scouting career).

The merit badge program plays a major role in the scouting advancement program and the only limitation of continuous learning are the scout's ambition and locating actively registered adult merit badge counselors who offer instruction on specific badges.

If you name the badge, Colin has it. All 139 badges were completed through days and weeks of hard work at over two-dozen summer camp, merit badge college and merit badge camporee events he attended over six straight years. He recalls welding, scuba, cycling, and rifle shooting badges among his favorites.



He stands in front of his Eagle Scout project — a 9/11 Memorial Monument dedicated to first responders.

His Welding badge was of significant importance in the construction of his own Eagle Project that took him over two years to complete— a 911 Patriot Day Memorial.

Today, all of the patches do not fit on a large licensed sash so a second sash had to be sewn to his original (which is BSA-specific instruction) as a scout may only wear one sash on his uniform. Two sashes sewn together make one larger sash. These 139 patches now cover the front and back of his sash and represent comprehensive orientation to dozens of career paths and over 100 different areas of knowledge and skills.

Colin revealed that going through the continuous process of working on merit badges has helped him significantly narrow down potential career paths of interest, with health care and military service being the focus for his career path. With this evolving knowledge he has a much better sense of prospective career interests, as well as recognizing what vocations were not a match for his interests.

At a Court of Honor Ceremony for Troop 22 in December, Scoutmaster Randy Kukorlo explained, *“Colin completed the Backpacking Merit Badge as his 139th merit badge, making him the only documented Scout from the Columbia-Montour Council to ever complete all available merit badges. He has them all. It’s a huge accomplishment and a lot of hard work.”*

When an Eagle Scout remains active and continues advancement Eagle Palms can be earned. The palm-earning process repeats with every five additional merit badges earned. Eagle palm requirements must be earned in sequence: bronze, gold and silver before a youth’s 18th birthday. So, Colin is also in select company of less than one-tenth of one percent of those Scouts who have earned all three Eagle Palms. Just before Christmas, Colin had earned 23

Palms, nearly eight-times the amount as most Scouts who earn palms. At the end of 2017, Colin was listed as the second-highest documented Eagle Scout in BSA history. There is an Eagle Scout from Limestone, N.Y. who is listed as having earned 24 Eagle Palms (a total of Eight Silver Palms). This Scout had the opportunity to complete additional briefly reinstated merit badges during the 2010 BSA Centennial celebration. They were re-retired the same year, when Colin was a Cub Scout.

Currently the maximum number of Eagle Palms Hill has earned is 23, a Pennsylvania best, worn as seven silver palms and one gold palm on his uniform above his heart.

Hill has met and partnered with local and regional organizations through his scouting career he otherwise wouldn't have connected with. One person he made an impression on was Amy Passiak, Project Manager for the NY/NJ Port Authority. *“Colin is a WTC Artifact Recipient, and that is not something given lightly. We look at character, project intentions, strategic planning and commitment. This young man was so prepared I would feel confident in stating that his work was more thorough than many of the other adults who applied on an international scale. Given the highly sensitive and important character of the former Twin Tower Artifacts, we ask that all groups adhere to intensive regulations. These regulations were critical to guaranteeing the integrity and security of the artifacts and designed to expedite the retrieval of artifacts in a timely and efficient manner. I have thanked Colin for his attention to detail and exceptional adherence to our policies and for his outstanding communication. Colin was a large part of what ended up being the next to last Steel remnants in our eight-year WTC Artifacts Give-A-Way Project honoring the memory of 9/11. After seeing how much work he did we decided to*

add his project information to our memorial archive at the National 9/11 Museum in NYC and on-line,” noted Passiak.

Scouting isn't the only area where he has excelled. Hill is consistently on the distinguished honor roll and was inducted into the National Honor Society during his sophomore year. He's a two-year member and lettered as a three-varsity sport student-athlete (swimming, soccer and track and field). In addition, he is the president of Venture Crew 22, Jr. Assistant Scoutmaster of Troop 22, Medal of Honor Winner of the Berwick Leo Service Club, and member of his school debate club.

Hill, a youth member of Saint Joseph Church of Berwick, also earned the Ad Atare Dei Award, which is the highest award a Boy Scout can earn in the Catholic Church.

Hill spoke about his reverence, one of the points of the Scout Law, *“I am very involved with community service throughout the year and I've attended every Scout Sunday as long as I can remember. I chose my confirmation name after Saint Eligious. I was influenced by him because he was a blacksmith who willingly gave all he could back to the people of his community. I enjoy working outside and taking part in community service projects.”*

Patrick Hill, Colin's father, said that his son's quest for attaining every merit badge moved into high gear when Lance Locher challenged Colin to complete more badges than he achieved. *“Lance wouldn't reveal to Colin exactly how many merit badges he had earned as a youth, but we were all under the impression it was quite a lot,”* said Hill. *“It's a wonderful feeling knowing there's other adult leaders as passionate as the youth and Lance's ability to work with the scouts the way they best respond to challenges gives them the confidence to be focused on personal goals.”*

Hill referred to his son's experience as 'The Scouting Advantage,' a term he first heard as a Scout in Explorer Post 521 (now dissolved) in the mid-to-late 1980s in Lock Haven. *"Colin has made the most of every opportunity to learn and develop competencies that will influence and serve him through future success as a young adult. Every parent tries to make sure their kids have the tools to lead successful lives, I couldn't be more proud that he has taken advantage of his opportunities, and through it all he has remained a humble and thoughtful person others look up to."* added Hill.

Colin credits the adult scouting leaders, his teachers, community leaders, and first responders for believing in him, and giving him someone to look up to. *"The adults are willing to help me with my goals. All I had to do was ask and be accountable for my own actions. I'm very grateful for their support."*

Recently nominated for the 2017 National BSA Adams Award, Colin is currently working toward his Summit Award Rank, the highest rank in Venturing, and is planning to apply for health care co-op positions to pursue a career in the medical field. When asked about how he feels about two-thirds of his life being dedicated in the Scouting program, Colin recalled, *"At first I wanted to do well in scouts because I wanted to be considered a person people could count on and to be accepted by the older scouts as someone who contributes. As a scout I've strengthened my resolve to be a good person in my community. Being an Eagle is a big responsibility and it's easier to make good choices when you live by the Scout Oath and Law."*
