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Friday, January 29, 2016

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## A Local Boy Scout Earns 140 Merit Badges



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Michael Johnson from Boy Scout Troop 390 has filled three sashes to hold all of his Boy Scout merit badges and honors.

Johnson finished his Boy Scout career in mid May when he turned 18 years old, having earned 140 merit badges, which includes four special badges available only for the Boy Scouts 2010 Centennial.

Each badge represents a new skill learned, a leap into an unfamiliar world or a fun adventure. Scouting has taught Johnson many things, and through the merit badges he is able to recall his many experiences, from learning to scuba dive and rock climb to doing home repairs, from creating and building robots to learning how movies are made. Earning some of the badges, like scuba diving and small boat sailing, was physically grueling. For small boat sailing, Johnson had to capsize a 20-foot sailboat, save a fellow sailor and right the boat while large yachts and sailboats were sailing by in the main channel to the ocean in Marina del Rey harbor. Perfecting his roller skating form involved at least six months of practice, and the winter sports merit badge required about 15 trips to Mountain High Ski Area until he successfully became an intermediate level skier. Johnson raised a red-eared slider turtle for reptile and amphibian study, which still lives happily in his backyard pond. He took care of the neighbor's dog every time they went out of town to earn the dog care merit badge, and he painstakingly learned three different forms of communication for the centennial signaling merit badge.

Boy Scouts of America does not track how many members receive this quantity of merit badges, but confirmed cases of this many merit badges are rare. An unofficial website tracking achievements of this type confirmed about 200 cases in the organization's 103-year history.

Johnson joined Troop 390 as a Cub Scout when he was 8 years old. He achieved scouting's highest rank, Eagle, at 14 with 76 merit badges completed. For his Boy Scout Eagle Project, he remodeled the entrance to Mountain Avenue Elementary School. This included adding a water feature with a kinetic sculpture of shapes and color, which Johnson designed, replanting flowers, adding tables and chairs for the students to play board games, and installing large colored steel plates with magnetic games for the children to use at recess.

Johnson said he loved all the research and work involved with completing the merit badges and, as new badges were released, looked forward to tackling them. Johnson also completed all of the Boy Scout of America National Outdoor Awards for hiking, riding, camping, aquatics, and adventure, as well as the Nova Awards for science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Johnson credited his father, also named Michael, with keeping him motivated, and his mother, Renée, when it came to the logistics of helping find counselors for the merit badges and driving him far distances for the outdoors-themed badges, or merit badge days in San Diego and Orange County.

On his 18th birthday, Johnson said of his scouting career, "It's kind of an interesting feeling because it's something I've been working on for so long and now it's over."

Johnson will continue with the organization in the Order of the Arrow group when he attends college in the fall. The Johnson Family thanks the Boy Scout leaders of Troop 390, Verdugo Hills Boy Scout Council, and the numerous Boy Scout merit badge counselors who helped make this possible.



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