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Getting Them All

By Brian Blake – North Star District Public Relations Chairman



Six years ago, Conor Killen of Troop 261 at [St. Therese Parish](#) in Parkville, MO., earned 10 merit badges at the [H. Roe Bartle Scout Reservation](#) near Osceola, MO during his first summer camp. This was followed up by attending several merit badge colleges over the next couple of years. When Conor realized that he had earned about sixty of the one hundred twenty two possible merit badges in the Boy Scout program, it was then that he set himself a goal of earning every merit badge. Conor and his father, Kurt Killen, got a copy of the Scouting poster "Merits of Scouting" which shows all 122 badges. With every merit badge earned, a push pin was stuck in the poster. Like vacation locations on a map, this became a daily reminder of a goal.

On Monday, September 21st, 2009, Conor turned in the last merit badge card, completing a goal that started six years ago. Earning all 122 merit badges meant Conor had to travel to five different states and Australia to complete the task. But, with each merit badge there is a story. Laying the merit badge sash out on the table, a few of the patches were randomly pointed at. [Coin Collecting](#) was earned at a hotel at a Coin Exposition in a St. Louis hotel. [Truck Transportation](#) was earned with Jeff Carver, an adult leader in Troop 261 who works at [YRC](#), where Conor and other Scouts in Troop 261 toured the freight distribution center. [Space Exploration](#) was earned at the [Kansas Cosmosphere and Space Center](#) in Hutchinson, KS, during a troop overnight where the entire Troop got to shoot off model rockets.

Conor and his dad Kurt Killen, along with his brother Matthew Killen (who is 14 years old and already has 94 merit badges of his own) found just about every merit badge college in the region. Attending many of these became a family event, such as white water rafting to earn the [Whitewater](#) merit badge, or an archeology dig in Illinois. Many weekend trips to merit badge colleges or shows were taken by the family. About 20 of the merit badges had Conor calling the merit badge counselors. Many of the counselors heard of Conor's goals and contacted the Troop asking how they could assist.

When asked about specific merit badges, Conor said that the easiest ones to earn were the Handicraft badges at the H. Roe Bartle Scout Reservation. The most difficult merit badges were Surveying and Backpacking. [Surviving](#) was really difficult for Conor because of the trigonometry required. [Backpacking](#) was difficult due to the time required and number of trips. The most fun merit badges were [Whitewater](#) and [Climbing](#). The most interesting merit badge was [Hiking](#) merit badge, where Conor traveled to Australia as part of World Youth Day in 2008 which was a Catholic trip to see the Pope. Conor was able to complete all of the Hiking requirements during this trip.

Conor is a junior at [St. James Academy](#) in Lenexa, KS. At this point in his life, Conor has not decided on what academic or professional career to pursue. He says that the three Citizenship merit badges, along with the public speaking part of [Communications](#) merit badge and all of the life skills merit badges, will help him in the future. Conor enjoys talking and debating and is leaning towards a career in law.

When asked if he had any regrets, Conor said that he had none. He is happy that he was able to complete the goal, and gives credit to his parents Kurt and Carla for helping out. Conor said that the most challenging part of the entire ordeal was the amount of paperwork that was required, coupled with the time that it took. The biggest thing that Conor had to learn was to prioritize his time. Conor's Scoutmaster Jim Hochstatter is proud of Conor's achievement and is pleased when Conor finds time to give leadership back to the Troop. Helping out with the younger Scouts is what Jim values the most. On any given Monday night, anywhere from four to seven Eagle Scouts are seen helping the first year scouts with their skills requirements.

Conor's advice to any Scout wanting to earn every merit badge is to start early. Work hard at getting everything that summer camp has to offer, make the most of any merit badge college you can find, and get to know all of the merit badge counselors in your unit. When those resources are exhausted, begin searching around outside of the area. Persistence is the main key if you want to "get them all!"

On Monday, October 5th, 2009, Troop 261 of St. Therese Parish will be holding its Fall Court of Honor. At this event, Conor should be awarded the remaining seven merit badges. Conor says that [Badge Magic](#) has been his friend, and believes he has just enough room to squeeze these last seven patches on his sash.

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