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Meritorious Scout earns 121 badges

Draper teen gets them all — enough for 6 Eagle awards

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DRAPER — Dallin Manning can talk American labor, American business, American cultures and American heritage while studying animal science, archaeology and architecture. He knows how to shoot an arrow and figure out when Orion will appear in the sky. He can fix the car so he can pick up some more art supplies. If he can't fix the car, he can always run or take a plane.

And those are just the A's in the merit badges offered by the Boy Scouts of America.

Manning, 17, has earned every one of them — all 121. That's enough to be an Eagle Scout six times.

It earned Manning a 30-minute chat with Utah Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. last week.

It's a feat so rare that the Boy Scouts of America doesn't keep track of how many Scouts attain it, but Kay Godfrey, spokesman for the Great Salt Lake Council, says he hears about four or five boys each year nationwide who complete the requirements for every merit badge. Compare that number with the 35,000 to 50,000 Scouts who will become Eagle Scouts this year.

"I'm really proud of him," Godfrey said.

A search of newspaper archives over the past 14 years revealed Christopher Haskell, of Elk Ridge, earned the last of all available merit badges in 2003, and Michael Ray Arsenault, of Farmington, did the same thing in 1993.

Earlier this year, "composite materials," the study and use of resins and fiberglass, used in boat repair, was made available as a merit badge. Manning earned it by June.

Manning's merit badge sash hardly had room for that last merit badge. His grandmother, Donna Moyer, had to sew it to the bottom point of the sash.

Today, friends, family and neighbors will celebrate Manning's accomplishment at 7 p.m. at Camp Tracy, located up Mill Creek Canyon. Scouting has no official ceremony to honor Scouts who earn every merit badge, so Manning's family decided to have a ceremony.

The accomplishment is one Manning said he couldn't have done without Moyer, who home-schooled Manning until the 2005-06 school year.

The boy who started Scouting as a shy 14-year-old has become a self-confident young man, Moyer said.

"We had a career education," she said.

Moyer and Manning went on field trips and conducted interviews with professionals in myriad industries so Manning could complete badge requirements. They always say "we" when they talk about the merit-badge marathon they've been running for the past few years.

It started with Manning's goal to earn 50 badges, but by the time he was getting close to that goal, he imagined he could earn the rest before he turned 18 and became ineligible to earn more.

"It's definitely a goal worth pursuing," Manning said.

Cinematography was a blast, he said, but so were wilderness survival, bird study and composite materials.

The variety of badges means Manning can have conversations on 121 different topics, he said. But don't expect him to talk too much about bugling. It was the hardest one for him to earn.

And his expertise, by the way, extends beyond Scouting. He's also an expert at the video game "Dance Dance Revolution." Gamers dance to a beat by stomping on floor panels that correspond to symbols scrolling up a video screen. Manning is ranked 156th in the nation.

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