

NORTHEAST JOCO SEPTEMBER 1, 2015

# Mission Hills Boy Scout John Rosher has earned all 137 merit badges, a rare feat



< 1 of 4 >

John Rosher **Joe Ledford** - jledford@kcstar.com

BY JENNIFER BHARGAVA  
*Special to The Star*

John Rosher can treat a jellyfish sting and ice skate backwards. He'll challenge you to a game of chess or make casual conversation about nuclear science.

He's traveled and studied with experts to gain firsthand knowledge on dozens of subjects.

And he's done it all in the name of Boy Scouts.

This week, the Mission Hills teenager, an Eagle Scout with Troop 16, was recognized during a Court of Honor for earning all 137 merit badges offered. He earned many of the badges in spectacular ways. Backpacking? He climbed Mount Kilimanjaro with his mother. Fishing? Surrounded by piranhas in the Amazon. Scuba diving? That was in the Cayman Islands.

Exotic locales aside, his accomplishment is a rare one.

In the 105-year history of the Boy Scouts of America, fewer than 300 scouts have earned every single merit badge, said Scott Boswell, president of the Heart of America Council.

The number drops significantly in the Kansas City area.

In the nine years Boswell has been involved in scouting in the Kansas City area, he only knows of two other young men who have done it. And the Heart of America Council serves 35,000 youth, more than any other per capita in the country in Boy Scouts.

“That’s a pretty impressive statistic,” Boswell said.

To earn the Eagle Scout designation, 21 badges are required.

“My badges represent more than just a number,” Rosher, who is a senior at The Pembroke Hill School, said. “They represent seven years of adventures with my family and all my hard work and all the scout leaders who helped me along the way. I couldn’t have accomplished this milestone without support.”

When Rosher joined Boy Scouts, his only goal was to earn more merit badges than his dad. His father, Jim Rosher, who is also an Eagle Scout, had earned 54 merit badges during his time in Scouting. It became a friendly competition between the two.

After surpassing his dad’s number, Rosher realized he wanted to keep going. He enjoyed the challenge.

“It’s been fun watching John grow up and stick to his goal after all these years,” said Jim Rosher, who is an assistant scoutmaster for Troop 16. “We’re so proud of him. I remember we were sitting around the campfire one night when he announced his plan to earn all the badges. We kind of laughed about it, but then one of the other Scoutmasters turned to me and said, ‘You know, he’s probably going to do it.’ And sure enough, he did.”

The merit badges range in subjects from safety to career skills.

To earn some of the more exotic badges, Rosher incorporated them into his family vacations.

He studied oceanography with a marine biologist in Seattle. He went whitewater rafting in Colorado. He practiced fishing in the Amazon jungle, surrounded by piranhas and alligators.

His favorite badge, however, is for scuba diving.

He earned it after taking a trip to the Cayman Islands with his family a couple years ago.

“You get so close to the fish and there’s turtles swimming right past you,” Rosher said. “You’re doing flips and there’s this feeling of almost being weightless. It’s incredible.”

Another memorable badge for Rosher is the backpacking one.

To earn that badge, Rosher and his mom hiked up Mount Kilimanjaro last winter.

Climbing the tallest free-standing mountain in the world was physically and emotionally exhausting, he said.

“You’re pushing your body as far as you can go,” he said. “A lot of people don’t make it.”

The day before the two of them reached the peak, they heard news of a woman who passed away during her journey. Another fell and broke her arm. Injured or exhausted climbers were often carried down the mountain on stretchers.

It was a scary ordeal for the mother and son, but when they reached the mountain peak at sunrise, their stress melted into awe.

“I’m never going to climb that mountain again, but I’ll always

remember that view,” Rosher said.

Not all the merit badges required a whirlwind vacation.

For his model design badge, he spent hours piecing together a 3D model of a house and a spaceship. For his landscape architecture badge, he painstakingly crafted a landscape redesign for St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church, where his troop meets.

Rosher remembers, with a grin, the first merit badge he earned at age 11. It was for taking care of a pet, a piece of cake for a kid whose mom is a veterinarian. He grew up surrounded by animals. The family currently has two dogs, a cat, finches, fish and a snake.

A couple of the hardest badges to earn for Rosher were those for bugle and skating.

Rosher, who has played the saxophone since fifth grade, found the trumpet difficult to master. He’s also not the best ice skater, he admitted.

Despite the challenges, he not only earned those badges, but became the official bugler for Troop 16.

All the hard work he put into earning each badge was not easy, especially since he’s also juggling band, soccer, cross-country/track and volunteer work.

“Looking back, I still don’t know how I did it,” Rosher said. “I remember some Friday nights where I really wanted to go out but I had to talk myself into working instead. It helped shape my time-management skills and self-discipline.”

His achievement awes those in the Scouting community.

“It’s incredibly exciting to see a young man accomplish so much by 17 years old,” said Boswell, who used to be a scoutmaster for Troop 16 and has known Rosher for eight years. “It’s unbelievable. He’s learned a vast variety of skills, everything from swimming to personal financial management, which he will take with him the rest of his life.”

In addition to earning all the merit badges, Rosher’s other Scouting achievements include being a member of the Order of the Arrow and a Tom Tom Beater in the Tribe of Mic-O-Say.

When Rosher turns 18 in February, he’ll become a scout leader, so he won’t be able to earn any more badges. But until then, he plans on earning the new badges that come out.

He’s a little sad that his days as a Scout are coming to an end, but he’s already looking forward to the future.

He hasn’t picked a college yet, but when he does, one of the first things he’s going to do is check out the nearest Boy Scout troops to see if he can be a leader.

No matter where life takes him, the stories and knowledge behind each merit badge will follow.

“All of these experiences have shaped me and taught me to be more adventurous because I’ve learned skills where I can survive in any situation,” Rosher said. “I love the outdoors, so that will always be a part of my life. Everything I learned in Boy Scouts will stay with me forever.”

*To reach Jennifer Bhargava, send email to [bhargava913@gmail.com](mailto:bhargava913@gmail.com).*

**MORE NORTHEAST JOCO**

---

**YOU MAY LIKE**

Sponsored Links by Taboola

**4 Upcoming Events At The Exploratorium**  
SF Gate

**New Rule in Washington Has Drivers Fuming**  
Provide-Savings.com

**The Fastest Way To Pay Off \$10,000 In Credit Card Debt**  
LendingTree

**Annette Funicello Dies of Multiple Sclerosis Symptoms**  
Lifescript

**COMMENTS**

---