

2 Nebraska 16-year-old Eagle Scouts earn every available merit badge

By Chris Peters / World-Herald staff writer Dec 6, 2014



KILEY CRUSE/THE WORLD-HERALD

Dylan Stamm and Jake Sindelar have earned every merit badge offered by the Boy Scouts.

Most Boy Scouts are lucky to rise to the rank of Eagle. Only about 6 percent make it.

It takes commitment. Eagle Scouts have to meet a list of requirements that includes earning 21 merit badges, holding a leadership position for six months and avoiding the well-known attrition of Scouts quitting around age 16.

Then there's the 0.01 percent of Eagle Scouts like Jake Sindelar and Dylan Stamm who need more than one sash to hold their collection of merit badges.

At 16 years old, the pair are the first and only known Scouts in Nebraska to earn every single available merit badge. That's 139 if you count the limited-time-only 100-year anniversary badges — and they do.

“If you look at a lot of the boys that get their Eagle now, they'll have between 25 and 40 merit badges at the most,” said Dennis Krecklow, the scoutmaster for Stamm's troop.

Sindelar and Stamm have gone scuba diving, whitewater rafting and rock climbing. They've flown airplanes, shot shotguns and made movies.

They've studied for months, memorizing semaphore and Morse code, and worked with music teachers to learn how to play a bugle. They've weaved baskets, designed board games and collected coins.

They've got merit badges for skating, small boat sailing and stamp collecting. Sadly, there's none available for badge sewing.

Some took an hour or two to earn. Others took months. In total, they can't count the hours it took to join the ranks of the 250 or so Scouts who have accomplished this feat since the 1920s.

“This has kind of consumed his life in a way,” said Stamm's mother, Marjean Stamm.

Both boys accomplished their goals with similar tenacity, but they followed radically different paths.

Dylan Stamm took a more traditional route to earning his final badge this October.

The son and nephew of Eagle Scouts and the grandson of an assistant scoutmaster, Stamm began in a tight-knit troop that raced to earn merit badges. In April 2007, he read a story in *The World-Herald* about a kid in Maryland earning all the badges. Soon after, he set his sights on the goal.

“That’s when I knew it was possible,” he said.

He began by earning his wood carving badge by carving a spoon at a camp in Fremont with friends. This fall, his path ended at Iowa Western Community College when he wrapped up his off-and-on pursuit of the theater badge.

In the car ride over from their home in Omaha, father Dave Stamm remembers his son telling him, “I really don’t know what this is going to mean until later in my life.”

One year, almost to the date, before Stamm earned his final badge, Sindelar checked the final badge off his list from a boarding school in California.

Sindelar and brother Luke had earned nearly 100 badges side-by-side over the years. His father, Kiely Sindelar, could have earned 10 himself, he said, if only he was young enough to be a Scout. Like the Stamms and other Scouts, the Sindelars traveled to Buena Vista, Colorado, for the whitewater badge and took classes at DiVentures for scuba diving, traveling to five states to earn badges.

The Omaha native, who lives in Fort Calhoun now, started with cinematography (now called “moviemaking”) and earned his last badge,

programming, early on a Saturday morning in October 2013 while away at Saint Michael's Abbey Preparatory School, an all-boys Catholic boarding school in Southern California.

Unlike nearly every other all-badger before him, Sindelar hadn't reached the rank of Eagle when he finished. He certainly had the 21 required badges, but from a thousand miles away, he was troopless and had to find a way around the rule requiring six months in a troop leadership position.

"He was sort of backed into a corner with no way he could stay in his troop and still become an Eagle," his father said.

Mid-America Council Scout Executive Eric Magendantz suggested Jake become a Lone Scout, a program that alters requirements for Scouts with extenuating circumstances. In place of a leadership position, Sindelar took on an additional project and earned his Eagle one month after getting his last badge.

So what now? Scouts don't age out until 18.

For Sindelar, it's a chance to breathe and switch his focus to college. He's back home in Fort Calhoun, working on finishing his junior year through home schooling. Some day, he plans on giving back again, but isn't sure whether that will be with Scouts or in a different way.

Stamm, too, is preparing for college. He acts as junior assistant scoutmaster for his troop, No. 429, and will complete his 100th night of outdoor camping next spring.

While the badges are all gone, Stamm isn't done adding to his wardrobe. Now he's chasing Eagle Palms.

Each Eagle Palm, represented by a metal leaf pin, requires three additional months of troop activity and five additional merit badges — that is, for those who still have some left to earn.

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SCOUT FACTS:

45 million: Boy Scouts since 1912

2.7 million: Eagle Scouts since 1912

139 badges available during Sindelar and Stamm's time in the Boy Scouts (four were available only in 2010 for 100th anniversary of Boy Scouts)

241 confirmed Scouts to earn all badges

2: Scouts in Nebraska to earn all badges

1: Scout in Iowa to earn all badges

42: Scouts in Utah to earn all badges, the most of any state

47% of confirmed all-badge earners accomplished the feat in 2009-13

6.9 million: Scouts earned First Aid badge between 1911-2012, the most popular badge

150,583: Scouts earned the Surveying badge between 1911-2012, the least popular active badge of the original set offered in 1911

Sources: www.meritbadgeknot.com, Boy Scouts of America