Eagle Scout is the highest ranking offered in the Boy Scouts of America with only 4% of Boy Scouts earning it. An Eagle Scout has to complete 21 merit badges covering a wide range of skills and activities with topics including citizenship, hiking, camping, cooking, fitness, first aid and swimming. Matt Glennon, a veteran-connected child and a high school senior is in that top four percent having earned the coveted rank in the fall of 2016. “The idea is to expose boys to a wide range of experiences with the goal of turning out a really well-rounded young man who has confidence in a range of competencies,” shared Matt.

“Plus, an Eagle Scout is a good citizen who willingly and regularly gives his time to help others.” Being a son of two Veterans, life for Matt has not been much different from other kids in his school. His parents go to work every day and are home every night, which he enjoys. “Both my parents have taught me the importance of service. They don’t spend a lot of time talking about what it was like for them when they were in the military, but my dad has some great stories about things he experienced and my mom was really glad she was able to serve,” shared Matt. His parents believe it is important to serve, and they have fostered many different opportunities for their family to give back to their community.

Matt has been involved in scouting since before he was born. “My dad is also an Eagle Scout; and I think as soon as he found out he was going to have a son, he started planning my scouting career,” joked Matt. He joined the Cub Scouts in first grade and never looked back. Now that he is 18 years old, he is an adult scout volunteer with his troop and gets to mentor younger scouts. “It’s a whole different kind of scouting for me.”

Over his scouting years, Matt has developed skills ranging from basics like knot tying, building a fire,
“Eagle Scouts were more likely than non-Scouts to have donated money, volunteered, held leadership positions in the community and score higher on validated measures of ambition, work ethics, morality, tolerance and respect for diversity.”

“Merit Beyond the Badge” study by the Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion and Program for Prosocial Behavior

Byron R. Johnson, PhD, Distinguished Professor of the Social Sciences, director of the Program on Prosocial Behavior, ISR co-director, principal investigator

Sung Joon Jang, PhD, associate professor of sociology, Baylor ISR Faculty Fellow, co-principal investigator

Young-Il Kim, PhD, a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at ISR, study co-author

“My parents] don’t spend a lot of time talking about what it was like for them when they were in the military, but my dad has some great stories about things he experienced and my mom was really glad she was able to serve.”

And identifying edible vs. poisonous plants to practicing emergency preparedness, taking care of the environment, and learning about citizenship and leadership. Matt gained certifications and specialized training in Open Water Scuba Diving, Wilderness First Aid, Lifesaving, and during his sophomore year, the Leave No Trace Training from the Center for Outdoor Ethics. “This course helped me develop skills to teach others how to minimize our impact on the environment, so that when we go camping, we leave the campsites like we find them, so others can enjoy the space for years to come,” shared Matt. When he is not out saving the environment, he enjoys regular activities like water sports, music, and videogames.

While Matt’s parents are retired from the military, the family still lives in a military community. “I think it’s great living in a town where there is always someone new to meet,” expressed Matt. Just this year one of his best friends moved away because her dad is still in the Army. Saying goodbye was hard for Matt but he promises they will keep in touch, “It’s a lot easier to stay connected because of all the technology we have today.” Matt makes friends easily so meeting new kids, learning about what they have done in other places, and where they have lived is interesting to him.

Texas Tech University accepted Matt into their civil engineering program. He is considering the ROTC program and joining the Army after college. He is grateful for all the opportunities the Boy Scouts have provided him. “I think that there will always be opportunity for me to use my leadership skills, whether as a leader of a team or to support whoever is placed in leadership over me,” shared Matt. “When you meet someone who has earned the Eagle Scout Badge, you should have confidence that he is someone who is honest, dedicated and confident in his abilities, someone who can complete the task you give him and someone you can trust to do the right thing, even when no one is looking.”
A Study on Boy Scouting

Dan Warren, PhD, Team Lead for Research and Evaluation, Boy Scouts of America (BSA), was involved in BSA and excelled to the highest rank of Eagle Scout. Achieving the highest rank in Boy Scouts was a changing point in his life. "The two biggest reasons I joined was to develop character and to participate in a values-based organization," shared Dan.

Post high school graduation, Dan left Scouting in his past and earned his degree in psychology and education. Years later, he met Richard M. Lerner, Ph.D., Bergstrom Chair in Applied Developmental Science and the Director of the Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development at Tufts University, where Dan was earning his Master’s degree in Child Development. Dan and Rich worked together on a successful 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development. Following the study, Dan taught 5th grade in public education for 9 years. "One day, all those years later, Rich called me and had just received a grant to study scouting and wanted me on it," shared Dan. "It was a fascinating opportunity to come back and study at a higher level and study scouting."

The study sought to understand character development in the Cub Scout years. "We collected data over 2.5 years and looked at positive attributions like being helpful, kind, trustworthy, and future mindedness. Attributions that were tied to kids having success over a lifetime," explained Dan. The purpose of scouting is to develop character, citizenship, fitness, and leadership. The study found that scouts who remained in the program longer had higher levels of trustworthiness, school competence, intentional self-regulation, and hopeful future expectation.

Today, Dan Warren, PhD, is Team Lead for Research & Evaluation for the Boy Scouts of America. Dan believes the standardization of BSA curriculum plays a huge role in easing the transition of mobile populations like military-connected children. "If I walk into a scout meeting in Boise, someone can look at my uniform and know a lot about me already. You know where I have been, what I have done, and that we have similar experiences. We are going to talk about those shared experiences and how they were different in our troops," shared Dan. "It is really powerful, and that's the socialization piece, not even the curriculum that the BSA brings."

"The two biggest reasons I joined was to develop character and to participate in a values-based organization."

The BSA works to make sure they provide resources to make the whole family feel supported, not just the child. According to Dan, "Boy Scouts is a powerful source for experimentation, education, and building meaningful, tangible skillsets."

Learn how Girl Scouts of the USA builds girls of courage, confidence, and character in the fall issue of On the Move!