

How to Help Your Son Become An Eagle Scout

By Barry Bingham

The following articles have been written for parents of Life Scouts on the trail to Eagle. The articles are designed to help parents coach and encourage their son to become an Eagle Scout.

The articles have been published in the Troop 677 Newsletter and can be found on the troop web site at www.troop677.org (click on Eagle Scouts, then Eagle Scout Information). Troop 677 is sponsored by the Ellisville, Missouri United Methodist Church, New Horizon District, Greater St. Louis Area Council.

Troop 677 is a large troop with over 110 Scouts. The Troop has 100 Eagle Scouts, with 25 Life Scouts on the trail to Eagle (as of November 2004). Barry Bingham is the Assistant Scoutmaster, Life to Eagle.

The articles published are:

- Part 1: addresses the role parents can play to help their son on the trail to Eagle
- Part 2: looks at the question "why should your son become an Eagle Scout?"
- Part 3: deals with the issue of "burn out"
- Part 4: discusses the Eagle Scout Leadership Service project
- Part 5: explores ideas to help Scouts identify an Eagle Scout Leadership Service Project
- Part 6: provides information on a successful Eagle Scout Court of Honor
- Part 7: reviews why some young men (as Eagle Scouts) and women (with the Gold Award from Girl Scouts) are successful at the U. S. Naval Academy.

Scout leaders can use these articles in any way that will help a young man become an Eagle Scout.

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How to Help Your Son Become An Eagle Scout By Barry Bingham

Part I



Troop 677 is fortunate to have seventeen Life Scouts on the trail to Eagle. An additional number of Star Scouts are poised to become Life Scouts. This provides an opportunity for many of them to become Eagle Scouts. How does the Troop help a Scout become an Eagle? How should parents help their son become an Eagle Scout?

This is the first in a series of articles in the Troop newsletter about helping Life Scouts earn the rank of Eagle.

Life to Eagle Meeting January 20, 2004

All Life Scouts are strongly encouraged to attend a meeting with Assistant Scoutmaster, Life to Eagle, Barry Bingham on January 20th, the second Troop meeting in January. The meeting will begin after the Troop announcements and continue until closing. Each Scout should bring his white three-ring binder previously provided to them by Barry Bingham. As a group, we will review the information in the binder and discuss each Scout's status. Helping in the meeting will be Eagle Scouts from the Troop who have recently been through the experience.

We plan to meet at least once a month as a Life to Eagle group. These meetings are necessary given the number of Life Scouts in the Troop. This approach worked well in 2000 and 2001 when we again had a large number of Life Scouts.

The White Binder

Each Life Scout receives from Barry Bingham a personalized white binder containing all the forms and materials provided by the Council as well as information on the process, examples of Eagle Scout projects in the Troop, ideas

to be successful on the trail to Eagle , and helpful ideas to make the Board of Reviews a success.

Scouts are encouraged to keep in this binder all information necessary to become an Eagle including a copy of their merit badge cards (keep the originals in a "safe") and information about their Eagle project.

Parents should read and become familiar with the contents of this binder. This material is available on the Troop web site at the Eagles page.

Troop 677 Eagle Board Members

Trained by the New Horizons District to serve on the Troop Eagle Board of Review are: Barry Bingham, Daryl Carpenter, John Linn, Miriam Love, Jim Ritts, Kathie Sammons, John Schrottenboer, Mike Strobl, Cliff Weeks, Dan Witthaus, Mike Rehn, Gregg Peterson, Helene Begley, Mike Esser, Ed Hugill, and Larry Lee. Each of these adults can help any Scout on the trail to Eagle.

Serving on the District Eagle Board of Review

Troop 677 is unique in that seven adult leaders are qualified and are serving on the District Eagle Board of Review. They are Helene Begley, Daryl Carpenter, John Linn, Miriam Love, Kathie Sammons, Mike Strobl, and Dan Witthaus.

What Can Parents Do?

Parents can be supportive of their son on the trail to Eagle. They can frequently express to him and in front of others their pride for his accomplishments in Scouting and his intent to become an Eagle Scout.

Parents can stay involved with the Troop's activities. There is a direct correlation between Scouts who reach Eagle and parents involved in a Troop, even if that involvement varies from a lot to a little. Involvement is the key.

Parents can remain interested in their son's progress. Ask Scouts to describe what they are working on, listen carefully, show an interest in what they say, and occasionally offer a suggestion. If nothing is being done, then ask "what can I do to help you?"

Parents can encourage a Scout to keep taking small steps along the trail, no matter how small. Keeping the Scout engaged and involved results in an Eagle Scout. Helping the Scout attend Scout meetings is important.

Some Scouts have found that asking an adult mentor to guide them helps them stay focused. This is an adult active in the Troop whom they know. Having

someone other than a parent encouraging a Scout along the trail is a good thing to do.

Parents should recognize that when Scouts enter their Freshman year of high school, their lives become very complicated and busy. By the time they are Sophomores and driving cars, life is almost impossible. Add “perfumes” from the girls and we wonder as parents how our sons will ever survive to age 18. Scouting becomes secondary and sometimes an embarrassment to the Scout.

As seniors in high school, however, young men realize that being an Eagle Scout does make a difference in a college application or when seeking a job. Their peer group begins to say “I wish I had completed my Eagle.”

Parents can encourage balance in a young man’s life. This is a life skill that is helpful to learn early. Too much time in sports can dominate a young man’s life, yet the team skills and physical fitness of a balanced sports program can help him develop.

Parents should encourage their son to attend the Life to Eagle meetings at the Troop and well as one of the District Life to Eagle meetings. The next District meeting is scheduled for February 18 at 7:00 p.m. at the Edward Jones building on I-270 and Manchester. Scouts should wear their Class A uniform to these meetings.

So what is the ideal timeframe to earn the rank of Eagle? Some believe it is before a young man becomes a Sophomore in high school. Each Scout is different, and each Scout will take his own trail to Eagle. Obviously, it is best not to wait until a Scout is seventeen-and-a-half years old (a Scout must be an Eagle by eighteen).

We encourage parents to avoid using the “boot” to encourage a Scout to become an Eagle. The “heavy hand” is rejected by a young man struggling to do everything in his life. Threats and harassment do not work. Your role as a parent is to be supportive, to listen, to express your hopes and dreams, and to help when you can.

Some parents will use incentives such as “you can drive the car when you are an Eagle Scout.” Each family must decide what works best for them and for their son. Some families have found that the “car incentive” was a tough incentive because their son was so busy in school that earning the Eagle by age 16 was difficult. What’s more important is that a Scout is constantly, however small, working on the trail to Eagle. One suggestion might be that by showing progress he earns the right to drive the car and enjoy other privileges.

The trail from Life to Eagle is difficult. If we assume a yardstick represents Tenderfoot to Eagle, then the last half of the yardstick represents Life to Eagle.

That's why only two out of every 100 Scouts who join Scouting earn the rank of Eagle.

Our role as Scout leaders is to provide the environment, encouragement, and information necessary for your son to earn the rank of Eagle. Your role is to be supportive, be involved in Scouting, and to listen. Your son's role is to take the lead and truly **earn** the rank of Eagle.

How to Help Your Son Become An Eagle Scout

By Barry Bingham

Part II



Troop 677 now has 21 Life Scouts. Last month we had 17. More Scouts will shortly become Life. This is an unprecedented time in the thirty-six year history of Troop 677.

Last month's newsletter contained Part I on How to Help Your Son Become An Eagle Scout.

This month we will look at the question "why should your son become an Eagle Scout?" and how can you help him better understand why.

Why should your son become an Eagle Scout?

Because... Nationally, only two out of every 100 boys who join Scouting reach the rank of Eagle. The Eagle distinguishes a young man from others. In Troop 677, the ratio is much higher based on some analysis recently done by Ed Hugill.

Because... An Eagle Scout learns leadership at an early age. He gets a taste for leadership and will seek it for the rest of his life, becoming more skilled at leading at every opportunity. Think of the titles used in Scouting: "Patrol Leader" and

“Assistant Senior Patrol Leader” and “Senior Patrol Leader.” Eagle Scout Kevin Rehn is a senior at Lafayette High School and is President of the Robotics Club which is building a robot costing over \$7000 to compete at the national level. His leadership skills have been noticed by the students, faculty, and parents involved. Where did he learn these skills?

Because... An Eagle Scout has lived by a set of values during his formative years that are sought by organizations later in his life. The Scout Oath and Law are values that applied in 1920 and will apply in 2020. Who is going to influence your son's values during the ages 11 to 18? What are those values?

Because ... An Eagle Scout is someone who gets things done. He proved it by climbing the trail to Eagle. An Eagle Scout finishes tasks. He's demonstrated that by becoming an Eagle.

Because ... An Eagle Scout has confidence and pride in what he can do. His Eagle rank has not been easy to achieve, but when done, gives him confidence to tackle other difficult goals.

Because ... An Eagle Scout is a well rounded individual. He has earned at least twenty-one merit badges. He's been exposed to skills he will use for the rest of his life: communication, physical fitness, citizenship, personal management, conservation, leadership, etc. He typically has a lot of interests in life because of his exposure to a variety of merit badges and experiences.

Because ... An Eagle Scout finds that careers and hobbies were triggered by his Scouting experience. Eagle Scout Steven Spielberg got his start in cinema photography because of the photography merit badge.

Because ... An Eagle Scout can put on his resume for the rest of his life two words that say a lot about him but require no further explanation: Eagle Scout.

Because ... An Eagle Scout will seek friends and organizations that reflect the values he believes in. My son, Eagle Scout Doug Bingham, was Senior Patrol Leader during his time in our Troop. As a senior at Southwest Missouri State University he has two very close friends. Both are Eagle Scouts.

Because ... An Eagle Scout will find that Scouting is a basis for professional relationships in later life. In 1997, I was called to the office of Monsanto's Chief Financial Officer. He was very upset over an issue he did not fully understand. He had refused to deal with two other executives who tried to help him. I was warned going into his office that I would likely be “thrown out” like the previous two people. Before he could say anything, I said “I understand you were a Scoutmaster.” “Yes”, he replied, “while I was an instructor at the Air Force Academy.” We spent the next fifteen minutes talking about Scouting, and five minutes resolving his misunderstanding.

Because ... An Eagle Scout joins a flock of leaders prominent in our nation where a higher than normal percentage of them are Eagle Scouts. Over ten percent of the cadets at the military academies are Eagle Scouts. The astronaut core working at NASA has a high percentage of Eagle Scouts. The first man to walk on the moon, Neil Armstrong, is an Eagle Scout. So is Don Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, who in 2003 received the Distinguished Eagle Scout Recognition from the national Boy Scouts of America. And so is Presidential candidate Dick Gebhardt, and President Gerry Ford, and U.S. Supreme Court Justice Steven Breyer, and New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, and J. Willard Marriott (Marriott Hotels), and the late author Steven Ambrose, and former CEO of McDonnell-Douglas Sandy McDonnell, and the late Sam Walton, the founder of Wal-Mart who received his Eagle in 1934, and General William Westmoreland, Commander of forces in Viet Nam, and Steve Fossett, the first man to circle the globe in a balloon, andthe list goes on.

A young boy at age 14 may not appreciate what being an Eagle Scout means. Someone has to explain it to him. Someone has to tell him why he should become an Eagle Scout using information from this article and other sources. That "someone" can be a parent.

How to Help Your Son Become An Eagle Scout

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Part III



This is the third article in the series on "How To Help Your Son Become An Eagle Scout." The first article addressed the role parents can play. The second article looked at the question "why should your son become an Eagle Scout?" and how can you help him better understand why.

This article deals with the issue of burn-out.

We are going to define “burn-out” as that time when your son’s interest in Scouting drops. It is a typical reaction of a young man who was very excited about Scouting, advanced to Star or Life Scout, went on many monthly campouts, attended three summer camps, and now finds the Scout meetings less interesting. About the same time, school and other activities begin to compete for his time. Sports often becomes a dominant part of a young man’s life. At age 16, he can drive a car and finds a level of freedom never before experienced in his life. Sometimes a girl friend becomes an important part of his life. His peer group, for better or worse, has great influence on him. All these events are normal in the development of a young man. As parents, we can accept this and support them in taking on new challenges in order to learn and grow.

Somewhere in this hectic part of a Scout’s life, we can provide the excitement and path to deal with burn-out. This will help him remain active in Scouting and achieve the rank of Eagle Scout.

Here are some thoughts on dealing with burn-out.

Help your son achieve balance. A life skill to learn early in a young man’s life is how to achieve a good balance of activities and interests. Too much studying or too little is not balance. A consuming sports focus is not balance. Too much Scouting can lead to an out-of-balance life. Our sons have many opportunities at this stage in their life. They can’t do everything. Deciding what is important to a young man, and doing them well leads to better balance.

Discuss burn-out with your son. Helping your son understand the concept of burn-out and balance will be worthwhile discussion. As you have probably experienced in your own life, it will occur over and over. Developing ways to deal with it can minimize its impact.

Choose Scouting activities that retain interest and create long-term goals. One of the great things about Scouting is its variety. There are so many things to do, so many things to explore and learn. Beyond the typical Scout activities of the first three years in Scouting is a great list of things to do that can retain interest in Scouting, better balance the time required, create long-term goals, and keep your son involved in Scouting. Here are some examples:

a. **Participate in high adventure trips.** Philmont, Northern Tier, and Sea Base are exciting trips. In 2004, several scouts are going to the Double H Ranch in New Mexico.

b. Join the JLTC staff. Serving on the JLTC staff improves a Scout's leadership skills. He teaches the skills (the best way to really learn). Eagle Scout Kevin Rehn has served on five JLTC staffs and has attended National JLTC at Philmont. Kevin has just been granted a \$4000 scholarship to Marquette University based on his demonstrated leadership in Scouting. Life Scout Paul Mathis served on the JLTC staff in 2003.

c. Serve on the summer camp staff. Troop 677 has had a number of Eagle Scouts serve on the summer camp staff. It's a great resume builder. College scholarships are available for those serving multiple summers. Renny Esser served in 2002. Dan Puttcamp, Andy Klesh, and Mark Doescher have also served.

d. Attend the National Jamboree. Held every four years at Fort A. P. Hill in Virginia (90 miles south of Washington, D. C.), the National Jamboree brings 40,000 Scouts and Scouters together for nine days of truly exciting opportunities. It's a candy land with so much to do that it's impossible to see and experience everything. Eagle Scouts Michael Curtis and John Krebsbach, and Life Scout Ryan Turk (preparing for his final Eagle Board of Review) attended the 2001 Jamboree.

e. Attend the World Jamboree. Worldwide Scouting comes together at the World Jamboree. The 2002 World Jamboree was held in Thailand, and the 2007 will be in England on the 100th birthday of Scouting in the country where it began.

f. Become active in Order of the Arrow beyond the troop. The Shawnee Lodge is led by Scout officers and directs the spring and fall conclaves. Eagle Scout Andy Klesh served as a Lodge officer and achieved the rank of Vigil. Serving on an OA ceremonial team has been very rewarding to Eagle Scouts Brian Klesh, Aaron Hartmann, Chris Graham, J. P. Bornholdt, and Lucas Sapp.

g. Serve as a Troop Guide. Teaching and guiding first year Scouts is another way to learn more about leadership and Scouting skills.

h. Become Assistant Senior Patrol Leader or Senior Patrol Leader. These positions are the top leaders in the Troop. All their leadership skills are put to use, and in our Troop, managing over 80 Scouts is a challenge.

i. As a Life Scout, begin the planning and eventual work on the Eagle Scout Project. Once a Scout is engaged in the Eagle Scout project, a new focus in Scouting emerges. In the beginning, the process appears daunting, but with the help provided by the Troop, Scouts move forward.

When the project is approved by the District Eagle Board of Review, the fun part begins...doing the project.

The Eagle has to be earned by the Scout. Ultimately, it is his commitment and work that earns him the right to be an Eagle Scout for the rest of his life. As parents, we can be supportive, help him remain involved in Scouting, provide ideas, and assist in removing roadblocks.

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Part IV



This is the fourth article in the series on “How To Help Your Son Become An Eagle Scout.” The first article addressed the role parents can play. The second article looked at the question “why should your son become an Eagle Scout?” and how can you help him better understand why. The third article dealt with the issue of burn-out. All three articles have been posted on the Troop web site at www.troop677.org (click on “Eagle Scouts” at the first page, then “Eagle Scout Information.”)

In this fourth article, we will review the Eagle Scout Leadership Service Project.

To earn the rank of Eagle, a Scout must earn 21 merit badges, 12 of which are required. He must complete a six-month term in a Troop leadership position, and complete the Eagle Scout Leadership Service Project (Eagle Project).

The *Boy Scout Handbook* states “While a Life Scout, plan, develop, and give leadership to others in a service project helpful to your religious institution, school, or your community. There are some limitations. Work involving Boy Scout Council property or done in conjunction with other Scouting activities is not acceptable for an Eagle Service Project. In addition, your project may not be performed for a business, be of a commercial nature, or be a fund-raiser except for securing materials or supplies needed to carry out your project. Your project idea must be approved by your Scoutmaster, by your Troop Committee, and by your Council or District before you begin.” The “Eagle Scout Leadership Service Project Workbook” adds that “Routine labor (a job or service normally rendered) should not be considered.”

The purposes of the Eagle Project are for the Scout to (1) demonstrate leadership and (2) provide a service to the community.

Leadership is yet another skill that a Scout will master through Scouting. It is a life skill that will be used for the rest of his life. Leadership is planning, organizing, directing, and controlling a project to completion.

The new Boy Scout *Fieldbook* says “A leader shares group responsibilities by delegating tasks and then providing resources and support so that everyone can succeed. In difficult situations, others will look to a leader for guidance, for wisdom, and for making essential decisions. Leaders adapt their leadership styles in response to the needs of individuals or groups. Leadership is about the willingness to listen, to observe, to share, to serve the interest of others. It is also about good judgment, making decisions, and putting plans in motion.”

A Life Scout can begin to plan his Eagle Project at any time after becoming a Life Scout, even if all the 21 merit badges have not been completed. Many Scouts find that working on the Eagle Project is fun and helps retain a focus on Scouting in their busy lives.

There are no specific requirements on how big a project should be. The amount of time spent by a Scout in planning the project and the actual working time spent in carrying out the project should be as much as is necessary to demonstrate leadership of others. Our experience in Troop 677 has shown that projects average over 100 man-hours and cost an average of \$300.

As with any project in life, the planning stage is the most critical and often the most time consuming. A Scout could spend 40% of the total man-hours on a project on planning. The amount of detail in the written project

plan is significant. The guideline is “if the Life Scout is not available, there is enough detail in the written plan that another person could complete the project.”

Getting started on a project --coming up with the idea is often the hardest part. Once started, a Scout can move at a steady pace. Where do you get ideas for a project?

Ideas for a project can come from many sources. Troop 677's Eagle Scout Alex Gavenda was looking for a project when he was asked “Alex, what do you enjoy doing outside of Scouting?” He said baseball, playing on a select team. It was suggested he do something for baseball or for the Pond Athletic Association. Alex pursued this idea and his project involved landscaping and correction of drainage problems at the Pond Athletic baseball fields. His fellow team mates worked on the project with him and came to his Eagle Scout ceremony.

A project may come from the Church where the Scout worships. For example, Troop 677's Life Scout Bobby Koontz is working on extensive shelving for the Lutheran Church on Clarkson Road. Eagle Scout Kevin Rehn made the collection boxes that are in the hallway near the Scout meeting room in the Ellisville United Methodist Church. Eagle Scout Chris Peterson made the cabinet at the left front of the Scout meeting room. Life Scout Paul Mathis is developing an idea to build a storage cabinet and rack for his church's choir brochures, music, and bells.

A project may come from the Scout's school. Troop 677's Life Scout Brandon Linn has written a proposal to build a podium and storage shelves for his academic stretch classroom. For a classroom at Rockwood Valley Middle School, Troop 677's Life Scout Drew Auer is developing a project to cut a canoe in half, make two book storage racks out of the canoes, and add moveable shelving between the two half-canoes.

A project does not always have to be about building something. Troop 677's Eagle Scout Andy Ritts led a team of Scouts to catalogue over 2000 books in the Ellisville United Methodist Church's Early Childhood Center Library and set up a computerized check out system. The Scouting for Food campaign conducted by Councils across the USA began as an Eagle project in St. Louis.

Where does the money come from? Money can come from a Scout's job if he has one, from donations by the sponsoring institution, and from his parents and friends. A fund raiser is encouraged, but not necessary. If a fund raiser is used, it must be part of the written project plan.

Who can work on the project? Those working on the project can be Scouts, non-Scout friends, and family. Troop 677's Eagle Scout Chris Peterson had a Girl Scout working on her Gold Award (equivalent to the Eagle) work on his project, and, in exchange, Chris worked on her project.

The proposed Eagle Scout project is written using the Eagle Scout Leadership Service Project Workbook. A Microsoft Word version of this workbook is available, and Scouts have found this is the easiest way to write the project. It also aids exchanging and improving drafts when working with Assistant Scoutmaster, Life to Eagle, Barry Bingham. Troop 677's Life Scout Ryan Turk's family was transferred to Atlanta but Ryan wanted to develop and complete his project under the guidance of Troop 677. All the correspondence and workbook writing has been done on email. Ryan has flown to St. Louis for his District Board of Reviews.

How can parents help their son with his Eagle Project?

Help Get Him Started. Talk with your son about possibilities for an Eagle Scout project. Is there something he could do that is associated with his interests outside of Scouting? Band? Soccer? Church? Something for an inner city group? His white binder contains a list of 32 projects completed by Troop 677 Eagles dating back to 1992, and the list is on the Troop web site.

Planning. Parents can study the examples of project workbooks we have provided your son (see the white binder). Parents can read and comment on initial drafts of the planning written up in the project workbook. Parents can ensure there is enough detail in the written project plan that another person could do the project without asking the Scout questions.

Discuss Leadership. The project is a unique opportunity for a Scout to demonstrate leadership at an early age. Talk with your son about leadership, your experiences, your successes and failures.

Participate in the project. Mothers and father can be involved in the project as a safety officer while the work is being done or as a coach. Parents must avoid doing the project or leading the project. For once, a Scout gets to tell his parents what to do!

Keep Your Son Involved. In earlier articles, we have stressed how important it is for a Scout to keep taking small steps forward. Eagle Scout Neil Armstrong was the first person to walk on the moon because small steps were taken all along the path President Kennedy set in 1961 when he said "we choose to go to the moon this decade."

Be Knowledgeable. Through these articles and information in your son's white binder, become knowledgeable of the process for your son to become an Eagle Scout. You can be a valuable resource to him.

How to Help Your Son Become An Eagle Scout

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Part V



This is the fifth article in the series on “How To Help Your Son Become An Eagle Scout.” The first article addressed the role parents can play. The second article looked at the question “why should your son become an Eagle Scout?” and how can you help him better understand why. The third article dealt with the issue of burn-out. The fourth article discussed the Eagle Scout Leadership Service Project. All four articles have been posted on the Troop web site at www.troop677.org (click on “Eagle Scouts” at the first page, then “Eagle Scout Information.”)

In this fifth article, we will explore ideas to help Scouts identify an Eagle Scout Leadership Service Project.

Identifying and getting started on the Service Project is often the biggest hurdle to becoming an Eagle Scout. Once a Scout has a viable idea for a project and makes the initial effort to write a description of the project for approval, the process proceeds more easily.

The Service Project may not benefit the Boy Scouts of America, may not solely be a fundraiser, may not be for a business or an individual, must be of real value to the benefiting organization, and may not be routine labor or maintenance. Projects such as trail cleaning and maintenance are not approved. Projects such as installing permanent trail signs or a bridge or steps do get improved.

The Scout may not begin working on the Service Project until the written proposal is approved by the Scoutmaster, the Troop Eagle Board of Review, the benefiting organization, and the District Eagle Board of

Review. This written proposal must contain enough detail that someone else can carry out the project using only the written plan.

The size and scope of the Service Project are limited only by the requirement that the projects affords the Scout an opportunity to show leadership to others. There are no minimum hours (the average in Troop 677 is about 100 man-hours) nor money (the average in Troop 677 is about \$300). The key is NOT time or money. The key is “does the project give the Scout the opportunity to demonstrate leadership?”

How can the Scout identify a project?

We often begin coaching a Scout by asking what the Scout’s interests are. Eagle Scout Brad Hugill was active in the Lafayette High School Band and led a team to build movable storage units for band uniforms. Eagle Scout Brian Magee played in the Lafayette High School Orchestra and led Scouts to make uniform closets for the orchestra.

Schools are a great source of projects. Eagle Scout Aaron Harmann led a group to build three 96” X 48” X 20” cabinets for the Rockwood Middle School. Eagle Scout Renny Esser led friends who laid out and painted a 50 foot by 50 foot map of the United States with different colors for each state on the asphalt playground of the Ellisville Elementary School.

Churches are another source of projects. Eagle Scout John Krebsbach led a group to build three shelving units for storage of toys at the nursery at the Ellisville United Methodist Church. Eagle Scout Derek Goltz designed and built an interactive water display using plastic pipes and pumps for the Early Childhood Development Center at the Ellisville Methodist Church.

City and County governments are another source of projects. Eagle Scout Devin Begley led Scouts to build benches in the format used in the 1800’s for the Historic Homes section at Faust Park. Eagle Scout J. P. Bornholdt led Scouts who built steps on the steep part of the Rockwood Trail in west St. Louis County. Eagle Scouts Ryan Bichtemann (2001) and Doug Bingham (1996) led Scouts who built wolf dens for the Wolf Sanctuary located across I-44 from Beaumont.

How did all these Scouts get started? Here are some approaches they used:

1. made a list of possible ideas and tested those ideas with Scout leaders
2. contacted a school, a church, a county park, or a city government and asked if there was a project that needed to be done

3. talked with their parents about possible projects
4. talked with other Scouts who had completed projects or were looking for projects to get ideas and shape their thoughts on the project proposal
5. asked people they knew at school or at church to identify possible projects
6. observed a problem (an opportunity) and came up with a solution
7. made at least one phone call per week to someone on the list to explore a project idea
8. chose a project for which they had a passion or special interest
9. chose a project because it would be challenging and give them a chance to learn something
10. put the project idea in writing using the format of the Eagle Scout Leadership Service Project workbook to help assess if enough leadership would be involved

Taking small steps to identify the project and always moving forward are the keys to success. You've noticed this theme throughout all five articles.

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Part VI



This is the sixth article in the series on “How To Help Your Son Become An Eagle Scout.” The first article addressed the role parents can play. The second article looked at the question “why should your son become an Eagle Scout?” and how can you help him better understand why. The third article dealt with the issue of burn-out. The fourth article discussed the Eagle Scout Leadership Service Project. The fifth article explored ideas to help Scouts identify an Eagle Scout Leadership Service Project. All five articles have been posted on the Troop web site at

www.troop677.org (click on “Eagle Scouts” at the first page, then “Eagle Scout Information.”)

In this sixth article, we will discuss the Eagle Scout ceremony.

The culmination of the Trail to Eagle for a young man is his Eagle Scout ceremony. Family, friends, teachers, public officials, Scouts, and Scouters can recognize his accomplishment and share this special day with him. We strongly encourage new Eagle Scouts to have an Eagle Scout Court of Honor. It's like graduation. It puts a capstone on the Trail to Eagle.

The Eagle Scout and his family design the ceremony they wish to have. Each ceremony can be unique. Some have been held at summer camp and used canoes and the lake to add drama to the ceremony. Eagle Scout Matt McCormick held his ceremony at a monthly campout and used Indian drums and costumes with a giant campfire. Eagle Scouts Brian Klesh and Lucas Sapp held a joint ceremony at Advancement University in 2002. The parents of Eagle Scout Ryan McQueen surprised Ryan by inviting his former Scoutmaster from Kentucky to attend and be a participant in his ceremony. Four Eagle Scouts in Troop 631 held a combined ceremony at the Marquette High School Theater and used the Marquette Drum Line and bugle calls as part of the flag ceremonies. Eagle Scout Jason d'Harlinque used the Sverdrup Lodge at Beaumont as the setting for his ceremony which was held on a Troop 677 monthly campout. Eagle Scout Dan McCluskey used the new Chesterfield City Hall as the setting for his ceremony, and had two mayors (John Nations of Chesterfield and Ed Marshall of Wildwood) were part of his presentation. Eagle Scout John Weeks chose a quiet family and friends recognition at a backyard barbecue sponsored by his parents.

An excellent resource for Eagle Scout ceremonies is a book published by Mark Ray titled “Eagle Scout Ceremonies.” It is available on loan from Barry Bingham. Another resource is a detailed template for a ceremony available from Barry Bingham. This template has been used by a number of Eagle Scouts and their parents to plan the ceremony. Also available from Barry Bingham is a binder full of ceremony brochures dating back to the early nineties which show various approaches taken by Eagle Scouts.

Successful ceremonies begin with detailed planning that starts three months in advance of the ceremony, involve an invitation sent three weeks before the ceremony, have a very strong Master of Ceremonies to direct the program, use a brochure as a handout to everyone coming, have a photographer (not necessarily a professional photographer) to capture the ceremony, and last no more than one hour.

As the Eagle and his family design their own unique ceremony, they can chose from the following typical elements of a ceremony (or create others): opening, presentation of the flags, Invocation, introduction of guests, a speaker talking about Scouting in general, a speaker covering the Eagle's scouting history, a speaker reviewing the Eagle's academic achievements and sports activities, proclamations and honors presented by public officials, what the Eagle badge means, presentation of the Eagle badge, family gift presentation, Troop gift presentation, remarks and thanks from the Eagle Scout, Benediction, Scoutmaster's minute, retreat of the colors, closing, and refreshments.

After the ceremony, the Eagle Scout sends out thank-you notes to those who made his day a great success. Eagle Scout Dan McCluskey designed a very special thank-you card containing a picture of him in his uniform. He wrote a personal message of thanks below the picture.

We encourage all Eagles and their families to have an Eagle Scout Court of Honor.

How to Help Your Son Become An Eagle Scout

By Barry Bingham

Part VII



This is the seventh article in the series on “How To Help Your Son Become An Eagle Scout.” The first article addressed the role parents can play. The second article looked at the question “why should your son become an Eagle Scout?” and how can you help him better understand why. The third article dealt with the issue of burn-out. The fourth article discussed the Eagle Scout Leadership Service Project. The fifth article explored ideas to help Scouts identify an Eagle Scout Leadership Service Project. The sixth article provided information on successful Eagle Scout Court of Honors. All six articles have been posted on the Troop web site at www.troop677.org (click on “Eagle Scouts” at the first page, then “Eagle Scout Information.”)

In this seventh article, we summarize an interview conducted by Barry Bingham at the Philmont Training Center with Eagle Scout and Professor

of Physics at the U. S. Naval Academy, John Ertel. Both were serving on the faculty at the Philmont Training Center. Professor Ertel provided some interesting insights into why some young men and women are successful at the U. S. Naval Academy.

An average of 11% of the Midshipmen at the U. S. Naval Academy are Eagle Scouts. At graduation, this percent increases to 14% because some Midshipmen do not graduate for one reason or another. Most Eagle Scouts, however, remain at the Academy and have a higher graduation percentage.

A number of Academy graduates who are Eagle Scouts have become well known Admirals in the Navy: Admiral Zumwalt (Viet Nam), Admiral Stansfield Turner (CIA Director), and Admiral Charles R. Larson (Naval Academy).

A study conducted by the Academy indicates that the Number One indicator of success at the Academy is whether the Midshipmen were active in a small business before entering the Academy. The small business could have been a paper route or lawn mowing or a number of other similar endeavors.

Tied for second as an indicator of success is a family tradition in the military and being an Eagle Scout or Gold Award (from the Girl Scouts).

Why is being involved in a small business and earning the Eagle Scout or Gold Award an indicator of success at the Academy?

Professor Ertel gave four reasons. These two achievements indicate that a young person has (1) learned to accept responsibility, (2) demonstrated a record of meeting obligations, (3) has learned to work with a diverse group of people, and (4) has subverted immediate gratification for long-term goals.

For the past twenty years, Professor Ertel has been helping Eagle Scouts succeed at the Academy. He is the faculty advisor for the Academy's Eagle Scout Association. There are 425 Eagles in the Association. The Association reports directly to the Superintendent of the Academy, Admiral Larson. The Eagle Scout Association is the only non-academic organization reporting directly to the Superintendent. The Association provides tutors and counseling to its members, all Eagle Scouts.

Professor Ertel is an Eagle Scout. He was an officer in the U. S. Marine Corps with service in Viet Nam. He earned his doctorate in Physics from Catholic University and has been on the faculty at the Academy since 1971.

Professor Ertel is Scoutmaster of a Troop in Annapolis as well as the faculty advisor for the Eagle Scout Association at the Academy. He is a member of the faculty at the Boy Scouts' national Philmont Training Center. He is also a member of the Boy Scouts' National Advancement Committee. Every four years, he serves on the staff at the National Jamboree. The Fall 2004 issue of *Eagletter* (the journal of the National Eagle Scout Association) published an article about Professor Ertel and the National Eagle Scout Association (NESA) Chapter at the Academy. NESA chapters are also at the Air Force Academy, West Point, and Coast Guard.

When asked to what he attributes his successes in life, Professor Ertel responded "being a Boy Scout and earning the Eagle rank, my undergraduate education at Emory University, my wife (who has also taught at the Academy), and the Marine Corp."

At the Academy, Professor Ertel gives the Marine Corp recruiting speech to encourage Midshipman to enter the Marine Corp upon graduation. He begins by asking "How many of you were in Boy Scouts?" He knows that a huge percentage of the audience were Scouts. "Did you enjoy the camping, the hiking, the backpacking, fire building, and the outdoor challenge? In the Marine Corp, we give you everything you experienced in Scouts plus teach you how to use military weapons."

Professor Ertel is encouraging Admiral Larson to use a program that has been successful at the U. S. Air Force Academy for over thirty years. Each year, thirty-two Air Force cadets come to Philmont and work as Rangers taking crews on their first two days of their trek. An additional four Cadets supervise the thirty-two Air Force-Philmont Rangers. The best four Rangers are selected to recruit and supervise another thirty-two Cadets for the following year.

Each year, the U. S. Naval Academy receives 20,000 applications. This group is narrowed to the top 3,000 applicants, and the best 1100 to 1200 are selected to attend the Academy. Four years later, 1000 Midshipman graduate, and an average of 14% of those are Eagle Scouts.