

# Neighbor

## Earning their wings

### *Arlington Heights students achieve Eagle Scout rank*

By Eileen O. Daday  
Daily Herald Correspondent  
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A trio of Arlington Heights teens finished what they started back in first grade. They earned their Eagle Scout rank, the highest level in Boy Scouts.

From what started in Tiger Cubs at Patton School, ended in the same place. The three, now all Hersey High School seniors, received their Eagle Scout awards recently at a court of honor ceremony at Patton School.

The prestigious ceremony took place before nearly 100 supporters, including their Patton teachers, family members, friends and fellow Scouts from Boy Scout Troop 34, headed by scoutmaster Dave Jackson of Arlington Heights.

"We never set out to do this, it just sort of evolved that way," said Matt Andrews, 18. "And then when we realized we were that close (to earning Eagle) we figured we might as well go for it."

"It was a continual progression," added Dane Owen, 18. "All of a sudden we turned around and 12 years had gone by."

What kept them in it, they said, were the camping trips, the physical challenges and the leadership opportunities offered in their troop. The 50 members of Troop 34 meet Monday evenings in the cafeteria of Thomas Middle School in Arlington Heights.

"Seeing other people advance and get their Eagle rank made me want to do it," said Nick Marston, 17. "It's been fun, sticking together throughout the whole thing."

In earning their Eagle rank, they defied the odds. Nationally, about 4 percent of the boys who start out in Boy Scouts end up earning their Eagle award, said officials with the Northwest Suburban Boy Scout Council in Mount Prospect.



John Hersey High School seniors Nick Marston, from left, Dane Owen and Matt Andrews earned their Eagle Scout badges together.

The trio's experience bears out the numbers. From their own first grade Tiger Cub den, the three figure they are the only ones left in Scouting.

To earn their Eagle rank they completed the 21 required merit badges and a service project in the community that involved at least 40 hours supervising others to complete the task.

All three friends helped with each other's project, along with troop members and family workers.

Andrews chose to find a project at Thomas Middle School, where the troop meets and where he and his two friends also attended school. He wound up laying a brick patio in a corner of the nature center in the courtyard of the school.

The patio has three picnic tables, and school officials hope to secure more to seat an entire classroom outdoors for an occasional class.

"The patio has become the focal point," said Principal Thomas O'Rourke. "We hope to develop another third of the courtyard for increased student use."

Owen, meantime, built his project around students' needs at Winston School in Palatine, where his mother, Carol Owen, is a teacher. He developed an after-school tutoring program for students with

behavioral disorders and learning disabilities.

"Mostly we helped them to prepare for the Constitution test and with their science projects," Owen said.

Marston turned to his church, St. James Catholic Church in Arlington Heights, for his service project. He organized a collection drive for the church's PADS site, which resulted in 2,449 items for site guests.

Their leadership demonstrated while earning their way to their Eagle award also opened doors when applying to college. Andrews heads to Purdue University to study computer engineering, while Owen will attend Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, to study engineering.

Marston will attend the Kiski School in Saltsburg, Penn., which is a preparatory school for the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis.