

# Scouting is alive and well in Orange County

Although Graeme Tidman has dedicated a lifetime to scouting he is new to being a Scoutmaster. But he'll learn soon enough because he has four sons who will matriculate into scouting over the next four consecutive years. And now his eldest son, Alex will soon break ground on his Eagle project.

Scouting is alive and well in Orange County, with six troops: two in Unionville, two in Locust Grove and one each in Gordonsville and Orange. A couple of weeks ago, an account of Orange's Troop 14's experiences rafting West Virginia's Gauley River appeared in the *Orange County Review*.

According to the Wikipedia, the Boy Scouts of America "is the largest youth organization in the United States." The BSA web site claims 4.6 million youth and 1.2 million adult members! "A million adults leading five million boys," muses Tidman. "That's a really good ratio of adult to youth. That's a whole lot better than they can do in any school."

Here's another little known fact: since its founding in 1910, 110 million Americans have been members of the BSA. And in Sam Osterhout's Eagle Scout project book appears a letter of congratulations from State Delegate Ed Scott, an Eagle Scout himself.

Sam's mom says "I don't see a decline [in local membership] and I haven't seen a large increase. It's about the same number of kids coming and going." She pauses briefly and adds, "I wish it would grow."

For fledgling Troop 16, membership has grown from five boys at its founding this past winter to 12 now. "Is there growth in Orange County for Boy Scouts? Absolutely," says Graeme Tidman confidently, adding his troop is expecting six



**Graeme Tidman (right) has his hands full as Scoutmaster for the new Troop 16 in Unionville; his son Alex is about to start building his Eagle Scout project. Alex is also active in the JROTC program at Orange County High School. Next year, he hopes to attend Virginia Military Institute.**

Photo by Phil Audibert



**Unionville Troop 16's Court of Honor. From left to right, back row: Sam Osterhout, Lee Baines, Graeme Tidman, Jamie Lee, Alex Tidman; middle row: Alex Keener, Ryan Wilt, Cody Fulcher, Ben Haynes; front row: Dylan Boeckmann, Jordan Lee, Evan Baines, Connor Booth.**

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more to bridge over from the Cub Scout/Webelos program this year.

But he doesn't want boys to rush into it. "I don't want a boy to come and sign up the very first night he comes because that's not what it's about. I want that boy to feel comfortable in the troop before he joins the troop."

Being a Scoutmaster requires "a lot of work, but it's rewarding. I enjoy watching the boys develop," continues Tidman. "Scouting has been a big blessing to our family and I enjoy giving back." This Proud

Dad will soon have his chance; his son, Alex, launches his Eagle Scout project any day now.

The project calls for a memorial garden in memory of all the OCHS students and staff who have accidentally died. A meandering path will lead up the hill between the OCHS Field House and the wooden fence behind Waugh Enterprises. The path will then split into a semicircle, faced by counteracting semi-circles of flowers, bushes and trees.

Four benches, two on each side, will

face a stone in the middle bearing a plaque with the names of all students and staff who have met unexpected deaths over the years. And yes, in a nod to grim reality, there will be room on the plaque for more names.

The garden will be a place of reflection, but because it is visible from the outdoor lunch area and its supervisor, students will be able to sit there and eat their mid-day meal. Trash cans will be placed nearby, and Tidman is working on a permanent maintenance agreement with the JROTC, "so when I leave this year, it doesn't just become a party house."

The inspiration for the project stems from the unexpected deaths of OCHS students, Val Roa, Caleb Smith, and most specifically, Joe Stanley whose life was claimed last year in a fiery car wreck on Route 20. "I knew Joe pretty well," says Alex somberly, "and I have a lot of friends who knew him really really well. And that death specifically got to our class because he was a year before us. Everybody knew Joe; he was just an awesome guy."

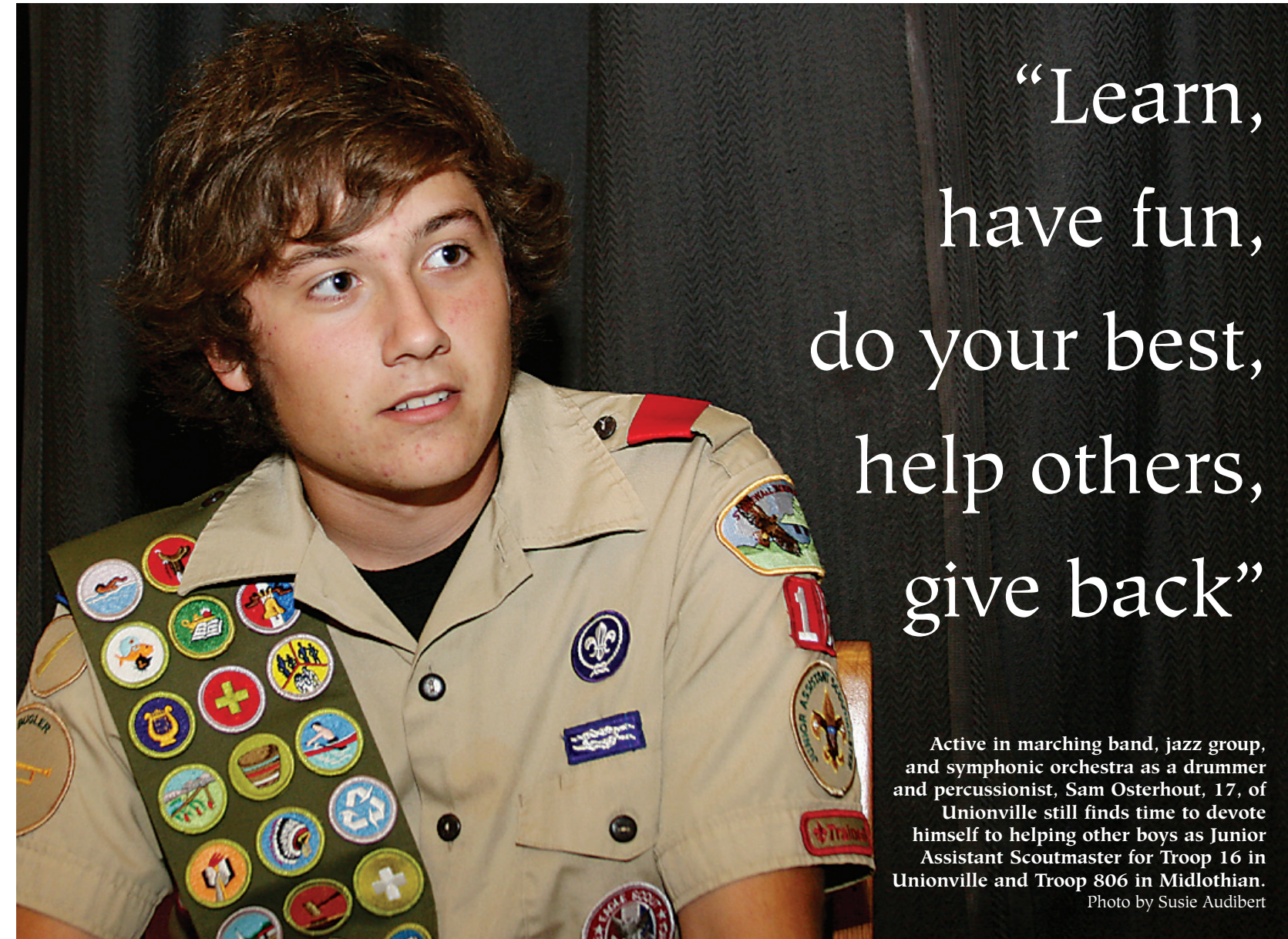
Approval for the project has been secured from the various local authorities. Alex only has to earn Stonewall Jackson Area Council approval before he can break ground. "I've been fighting for this project for a long time," he says determinedly.

His Dad points out that even though a landscape architect will provide guidance, "Alex is responsible for doing all of the work...What an Eagle project is, is a leadership project for the boy. The boy has to plan it, organize it, do it; actually do the manual labor, fundraise, keep track of the finances, everything."

If you ask Alex Tidman what he enjoys most about scouting, his answer is remarkably similar to his good friend, Sam Osterhout. "I stayed in scouting mainly for the younger guys now to make sure that they get what they want out of the scouting program." Active in JROTC, Alex plans on attending VMI next year with the goal of becoming a military lawyer.

But he might have a parallel career in teaching and mentoring. He says his most rewarding experience in scouting came when he worked two summers as an instructor/counselor at Camp Shenandoah, "every week seeing a new group of boys develop into leaders and pulling together. Even though they could have hated each other on Monday, by Friday they were helping each other. We do a five-mile hike and seeing them help each other up that mountain, seeing that development and leadership in those young kids, and knowing that I helped make that difference; that's what it's all about."

Proud Dad Graeme can only smile.



"Learn, have fun, do your best, help others, give back"

Active in marching band, jazz group, and symphonic orchestra as a drummer and percussionist, Sam Osterhout, 17, of Unionville still finds time to devote himself to helping other boys as Junior Assistant Scoutmaster for Troop 16 in Unionville and Troop 806 in Midlothian.  
Photo by Susie Audibert

Until early last week, something like nine Boy Scouts nationwide had earned all 121 merit badges. **Sam just joined that elite group.**

"The purpose is clear: Learn, Have Fun, Do Your Best, Help Others, Give Back."

These words appear in a short bio that Liz Osterhout has written about her son. But, proud mothers notwithstanding, that phrase pretty much sums up 17-year-old Sam of Unionville.

Take the "learn" part as an example. Until early last week, something like nine Boy Scouts nationwide had earned all 121 merit badges. Sam just joined that elite group. That's right, you read that correctly. Sam Osterhout, pronounced OH-ster-howt, of little ol' Unionville, just completed his final two merit badge requirements. He now has every... single... one...every one that you can possibly earn as a Boy Scout.

Proud Mom Liz has had to extend by several inches the green sash bearing the half-dollar size badges that she has painstakingly sewn to it. In neat rows of three, they stretch across his chest and



Proud Mom Liz Osterhout has supported her three sons in boy scouts by being a tireless taxi driver, fundraiser, and general cheerleader for troops in Midlothian and Unionville. During her spare time, she's a kindergarten teacher at Unionville Elementary.

Photo by Susie Audibert

INSIDER

By PHIL AUDIBERT  
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down his back from shoulder to hip, each one bearing a symbol of something he has learned.

No wonder Liz is proud; it is a staggering accomplishment, one that invites twisting the familiar phrase to read: Master of all trades; Jack of none. Swimming, sportsmanship, photography, pets, reading, citizenship, music, personal management, wilderness survival, basketry, rowing...the list goes on and on and on.

"The more simple merit badges; it is quick and easy, with only two requirements," explains this unpretentious mop-topped teenager dressed in baggy shorts and a waycool Beatles T-shirt. "For other merit badges it might be as many as 12 with sub requirements." Basketry, Sam shrugs; that's doable in a weekend. But others, like woodworking for example, take months. "So you learn a lot when you do different merit badges. You can learn what kind of things you might want to go into when you grow up."

Okay, we'll bite. What do you want to be when you grow up?

Actually, Sam is torn...between engineering and music. He's not sure which one he will major in when he goes to James Madison University next year. You can almost feel the tug of war going on between his left and right brain...the logical choice versus the capricious one.

Proud Mom, as all moms do, lands squarely on the side of practicality. "Well, if you want to get married and have a house," reasons Liz, "you have to have a salary, and it's kind of tough to play in a band..." She lets the sentence dangle.

You can almost hear Sam's "But Mom!" protest. After all, he plays drums for the OCHS marching band, the jazz band and sight-reads percussion music for the symphonic orchestra. "I've always loved music," he says earnestly. He always will.

"I know that is your passion, so you may switch," she compromises. Actually, one senses that Proud Mom is not over-wrought worried about Sam's major or choice of careers. Whatever he chooses, he'll do just fine. If engineering and music don't work out, he has 119 other things that he's pretty darn good at.

So what was the hardest merit badge to earn? Cycling was tough. Besides memorizing every part of the bike, plus know how to change a flat, he had to ride two 10-milers, two 15-milers

and one 50-miler in eight hours or less. He pulled that off on the C & O Canal outside Washington, DC. Hiking? He plodded through a 100-mile backpacking trip with a 50-pound pack near Philmont, New Mexico this past summer. Does that count?

Certainly.

But the toughest merit badge was the next to last one he earned... bugling.

Bugling? "I'm a percussionist and bugling is not percussion," says Sam succinctly. Besides, a bugle has no valves. You do it all with your lip and your lung...well, your diaphragm actually. So the drummer boy became the boogie woogie bugle boy of not Company B, but Troop 16, a new Unionville area troop that was organized just this past winter.

To earn the merit badge you have to be the troop bugler for three months. Well at the time, the troop was barely three months old! And then you have to know something like 15 calls, including, of course, reveille and taps, and you even have to make up a call that is specific to a task within your troop. Whew!

So what was his favorite merit badge? "Believe it or not, I really enjoyed Bird Study. It was a really cool merit badge." He points to the patch on the sash bearing the image of Virginia's state bird, the Cardinal.

Another area where Sam has excelled is in the exclusive Order of the Arrow, a community service arm of Boy Scouts that focuses on Native American culture. He is currently being considered

for the third and highest rank in the order. "Someone sponsors you without you knowing that they have done that. You can't ask for it. You just do everything you can to help and be of service and that's what Sam's being considered for right now," says Proud Mom. Sam just earned his ninth "palm" pin; each one represents five additional merit badges beyond the 21 required to be an Eagle Scout.

Ah yes, Eagle Scout. Besides having to accrue 21 merit badges, with the following 12 required: swimming, environmental science,



Running three across, down his back and chest from shoulder to hip, Sam Osterhout's sash had to be lengthened to accommodate all 121 merit badges. Just last week, he completed his two remaining merit badge requirements. He has now earned every possible badge offered by Boy Scouts.

Photo by Susie Audibert



Sam Osterhout receives his last merit badge, called American Labor from counselor Tom McKee. Sam has now earned every merit badge offered by the Boy Scouts...121 total.

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Friday afternoons, Sam Osterhout is practicing with the OCHS marching band just prior to the weekly football game. He hopes to attend JMU next fall and major in either music or engineering.

Photo by Phil Audibert

communications, emergency preparedness, camping, personal management, fitness, citizenship in the community, nation and world, hiking, family life; besides those 12 and nine more electives, he has to have a community service project.

Sam produces a ring binder the size of the New York phone book. "War and Peace" is what his Midlothian Scoutmaster, Mike Pace, called it. Achieved in 2006 with Sam's alternate troop in Chesterfield County, it is the definitive record of his Eagle Scout project, from inking to fruition and everything in between: drawings, bills, budgets, proposals, photographs, work orders, letters, you name it.

Sam's project was to build a memorial for a 12-year-old Little Leaguer who died of unexplained causes. And so working with the Manchester High School principal, the Midlothian School Board, the Little League, and with the help of an army of volunteers, Proud Moms, Proud Dads, and some nice discounts from building supply stores like Lowe's, Sam designed and built a memorial park to this young man complete with benches, flag pole, flagstones, baseball diamond motif, and a memorial boulder bearing the deceased's name.

Scouting runs deep in the Osterhout family. Sam's two older brothers, Chris and Ben both achieved Eagle Scout status before "aging out" at 18. Sam joined middle brother Ben in the Order of the Arrow, where they both made authentic Indian costumes from scratch and won Conclave dance contests.

"My two boys, they just feel that the Native Americans...were not treated properly," says Proud Mom Liz, who, when she is not busy ferrying boys and fundraising, is teaching kindergarten at Unionville Elementary. "If it's not band, it's scouts, and if it's not scouts, it's church," she says of the family's busy schedule.

The Osterhouts moved to Orange County from Chesterfield so that Sam's Dad could more easily commute to his job at the

Pentagon. Now, he works much closer...at North Anna, and Sam is the one doing the traveling. He maintains dual scout membership, one in Unionville, the other in Midlothian, to which he travels 150 miles round trip for meetings and outings.

Anyway, here's a tough question; is Sam ever teased for being such an enthusiastic Boy Scout? "Not so much," he shrugs. "It depends. If someone says, 'Man you're such a nerd for doing scouts,' I say, 'Why don't you go out and try it. It's not that bad.'" That's the exception. "Most people don't have that point of view. They don't think it's that terrible. They say, 'So you're in the scouts. That's cool.' They don't look down upon it."

Proud Mom jumps in. "Even though kids pick on Boy Scouts; that does happen, I believe the community feels there's a definite place and need for them. Boy Scouts is something that helps kids learn what's important in life. It gives them great goals. It gives them great moral lessons."

And so, "The purpose is clear: Learn, Have Fun, Do Your Best, Help Others, Give Back." Liz Osterhout points out that many kids drop out of scouts once they've earned their Eagle rank. "But Sam said 'it's time to give back.' He never walked away from it, and he just keeps going....If anybody needs anything, he's there to help. They know he's that kind of person, but he doesn't advertise it."

Proud Mom briefly apologizes for beating the scouting drum so loudly, but then launches into it again. "You can do positive things," she says passionately. "You can give to the people around you, and I think when kids realize how important it is, that it's not about us; about others. When you are someone who gives, you get back in the sense you feel good about what you're doing. It gives you a positive aura."

Asked what he gets out of scouts, Sam is momentarily stymied. "It's a really good question and I've never been good at answering it. I love helping the kids around me." He pauses and adds, "Everything you learn in Boy Scouts you can use for the rest of your life."

Like all 121 Merit Badges. Sam Osterhout gives the impression that the numbers weren't important. He was not trying to break a record; he was genuinely interested in becoming skilled in 121 fields. And in the process, he has learned, had fun, done his best, helped others and given back.



Both active in the Order of the Arrow, Sam and brother Ben Osterhout were pictured here in Native American garb. Sam (left) made his entire costume himself, and both boys have won first place in consecutive conclave dance competitions.

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