



CLAYTON PIONEER

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Eagle Scout projects bring big improvements to parks



January 24, 2011 - By Pamela Wiesendanger

How many people can say they earned 21 merit badges by age 18? Served six months as a group leader? Planned, developed and led a community service project? Six and counting in the Pioneer's distribution area.

These Boy Scouts have progressed through five levels of scouting and are attempting to earn the highest rank of Eagle Scout. Only 5 percent of all Boy Scouts earned Eagle Scout rank nationwide in 2010.

Four Eagle Scout projects were finished in Clayton in December: one at Lydia Lane Park and three at the Clayton Dog Park. James Van Wyck, Troop 262, built a horseshoe pit at Lydia Lane Park. Clark Blatter, Garrett Blatter (cousin) and Bryan Crase, Troop 492, made water and landscaping improvements at the dog park. The Scouts are at various stages of doing final write-ups of their projects and getting board approval to earn the Eagle Scout rank.

James is a senior in high school and has his Eagle Scout Board of Review in one month. He chose the horseshoe pit at Lydia Lane Park from the city's wish list of projects. He added his own special touch of a square sand pit around the stakes, with gravel between them.

While completing the project, James says his most important lesson was leadership communicating with people to direct them and achieve a goal.

He appreciates the experiences he had as a Boy Scout. "Boy Scouts is really a great thing for young men," he notes. Clark, a freshman, planted six trees in the Clayton Dog Park. His troop committee chair, Stan Hansen, helped select appropriate trees for the





climate while providing shade. Clark also coordinated with Bryan, who enhanced the water system.

Clark says he learned the values of hard work, leadership, planning and executing. “Some people think Boy Scouts are nerdy or dorky, but really, it’s a great experience,” states Clark. Garrett finished his dog park project and has yet to do his final write-up, but he is motivated. His parents said he has to have his Eagle Scout rank before he can get his driver’s license. The freshman installed two water stations, adding to the one already at the north end of the park.

Garrett installed a water station midway in the park and in the small dog play area. Each station serves a multipurpose: It has a fountain for people, a spigot for filling dog bowls and irrigation below for plants.

“It was a good learning experience,” says Garrett, who discovered the value of thorough research.

Bryan, a senior, installed a water station at the south end of the dog park. He arranged for an adult to dig a 260-foot trench with heavy equipment. The station included a fountain, spigot and irrigation as well.

The Scouts meet with Mark Hall, district advancement chair, when they are contemplating an Eagle Scout project. Hall explains the process and expectations. The Scout then meets with Derek Brown, district Eagle advisor. He works with the Scout to insure the project is “focused and sufficient in size for them to demonstrate leadership, the purpose of the project,” explains Hall. Thorough documentation is required. The Scout’s post project write-up goes to Hall, who works with a coordinator to schedule the Eagle Scout Board of Review. If the project is approved, the Scout receives an Eagle Scout badge in a special ceremony called the Court of Honor.

For James, true approval of the project comes from the many footprints he has found around the horseshoe pit.

The same could be said for the dog park projects. “People are coming here in droves for the improvements,” says dog park user Elaine Friedman.

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