

## EARNING THE EAGLE SCOUT RANK THE ARTISTIC WAY

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A Boy Scout can fulfill the Eagle Scout Leadership Project requirement in many different ways.

As Sam Van Dine's says, "You don't have to be into hunting or get dirty to become an Eagle Scout. You can be artsy or nerdy and still earn the rank."

Sam is an energetic young man of fourteen, in 8<sup>th</sup> grade at Saugatuck Middle School and a member of Troop 2 in Fennville. For his Eagle Scout Leadership Project, he headed a group of Scouts, Leaders and other adults in building a cat interactive play structure and plans to donate it to the West Olive Harbor Humane Society for the cats in that facility.

"It is full of things that cats like to play on," Sam says. "That includes a hideaway house, a scratching post, and tennis balls hanging from triangular stairs that lead up to a tunnel that spins when a cat climbs inside. A bird cage mounted on a pole is also included. The structure is 6 feet across, 5 feet tall and 2 feet wide." Sam should know about cats. He has two; Ninja and Symbol. They have already made themselves at home in the little hideaway house.

"I've worked on this project since October 2009 in order to qualify for my Eagle Scout Rank," Sam continues. "My theme for the project is – Cats take over the Backyard." On the front of the structure a sign reads; Cats Rule – Dogs Drool.

"The materials I used were wood, nails, chains, paint, bungee cords, rope, and indoor/outdoor grass for the steps of the stairs. The tunnel is made out of a cardboard tube."

When asked what made him choose this for his Eagle Scout Project, Sam says, "I love animals and I went to the West Olive Harbor Humane Society and saw their cat room. They had very little to offer cats to play on. I thought, that's pathetic. That was when I decided to build a structure for them."

The idea came about when his Mother, Liz and his stepfather, Mark Rutledge and Sam sat down and brainstormed the idea for a structure for the cats.

"A lot of creativity and innovation went into this structure," says Liz.

"At first we came up with circular steps, and then they changed to a triangular shape," Sam explained.

Then Sam designed the structure, made the supply list and received the approval of his Scout Master, Craig Nelson, and Advancement Chair, Mary Nelson. Next, at a round table meeting which takes place every month with the Leaders of the Boys Scouts, the District Advancement Committee member Bob Whitaker had to approve the idea for the project, and then Sam took it to the Volunteer Coordinator, Natasha Irwin at the West Olive Harbor Humane Society. Both Whitaker and Irwin gave their approval.

Liz, Sam's mother says, "The nice thing about scouting is it can include kids with all kinds of interests. Whatever the interest there is a place for you. They offer a Dentistry Merit Badge, a Photography Merit Badge, and a Theater Merit Badge with 128 different merit badges available."

What's left for Sam to do to earn the rank of Eagle Scout? "I have to earn four more Merit Badges; in First Aid, Environmental Science, Emergency Preparedness and Camping." In addition, Sam is Troop Historian for Troop 2 in Fennville.

"I surmise that by mid-fall I will be ready for the Eagle Scout Rank," Sam says proudly. "Anyone who puts their mind to it can make it happen."

Hobbies such as painting, reading, singing and playing a tuba rank among his favorites. "My family is the most important thing to me, however," he adds.

Sam was born in Holland and raised in Glenn. "I've lived all my life in the same house in the country. I have one dog, Chip, two cats, seven siblings; four step-sisters, and two half-brothers and one full brother. Two brothers live with me."

His mother and step-father were supportive of his work in building the interactive cat structure. "My grandfather, Wilber Mc Vay who recently passed away inspired me to work toward my eagle rank," Sam says. "I want to thank him for that."

The cat interactive structure was delivered to the West Olive Harbor Humane Society on Saturday, May 15. Now Sam will get started working toward his next merit badge.