

## EAGLE SCOUTS - MYTH

Upon involvement in scouting people are constantly bombarded with statistics. For example, we constantly hear some version of “only three percent of all scouts will ever receive their Eagle award,” or “the scouts in this area show a higher average receipt of Eagle awards than any other area of the country.” Statistics are dangerous. Used properly statistics can build, motivate and serve as guidelines; however, if not used carefully, they will destroy confidence, make tasks seem impossible or improbable, and even serve as a crutch for justifying failure.

Generally speaking, young men know no bounds. Restrictions and decreased motivation are most often an environmental phenomenon created by leaders. While only three percent of scouts may achieve their Eagle rank, this is nothing more than a statistic. It should only be used as praise for a young man who has soared. The statistic is not meant as a limiting factor - do not use it as one. Do not let the young men reason that the troop has already awarded its 3% quota of Eagles so they may now cease work. Every scoutmaster, scouting coordinator, committee chairman, committee member, and chartered organization leader should have as their goal a troop of 100% Eagle Scouts. To say that it *cannot* or *should not* be done is the first great myth.

## THE TRUTH BEHIND THE MYTH

Most people who subscribe to the myth that only a few boys should be Eagles base their belief on the qualifications and expectations that are attached to a young man who wears the Eagle badge. To wear the Eagle badge, a young man must be mature, highly motivated, goal oriented, have developed leadership skills and woodsman skills, exhibit a high degree of citizenship, demonstrate a loyalty to his God, and exhibit a positive self image. That's a formidable task, yes, a task not achieved by many young men. However, with the right leadership it is a task within the reach of every young man, and it is upon this premise that I base my analysis of effective programs. The first leadership truth is that every young man within the reach of an effective scoutmaster can and should be an Eagle Scout.

Having been involved in scouting leadership for years, the response to that statement is anticipated. Immediately after declaring my first leadership truth I am usually criticized about my opinion of scouting and blasted with a number of applied limitations. *An applied limitation is a limitation that only exists because someone in authority has applied the limitation to a person.* For example, if a young man is constantly told he is not mature enough he will attach that limitation and point to it as the reason why he does not succeed. Over and over again I have seen young scouts enter the scouting program at eleven years of age with the motivation of a freight train traveling at full speed, only to have some leader figuratively grab hold of the boy's coat tails and tell him to slow down. “slow down or you will burn out.” “Twelve-year-old boys are not mature enough to be Star Scouts.” “You cannot work on that merit badge, you aren't old enough.” Or, in the case of older scouts, “you don't have the ability to catch up with the scouts your age; just come on the camps with us.” These, and all other applied limitations form the misconceptions that stand in the way or “limit” a troop from being a 100% Eagle Troop. ***The simple truth is that 100% of the troop can be Eagle Scouts, and leaders should not be embarrassed at a high level of advancement.*** Eagle Scouts are in fact the ultimate goal (but not the final or only goal) of the system, because the Eagle award embodies the skills and moral characteristics inherent in the program.

*(reprinted from “On Tender Feet and Eagles' Wings” by Kevin R. Murray)*

*Watch next month for Misconception #1*