

Nicholas Drake overcomes challenges to complete his Eagle Scout project

By **JASON KAPLAN**

He rebuilt bridge and repaired path

Nicholas Drake, a member of Boy Scout Troop 118, was one of four scouts to earn the rank of Eagle during a Court of Honor ceremony held on June 9. His project entailed clearing a trail and rebuilding a bridge in Black Rock Forest.

"It's surreal because I never expected to get to this spot," Drake said of earning his Eagle. "For the five or six years doing Scouting as a whole, I was thinking about being an Eagle Scout. It was one of my main goals throughout the entire journey of Scouting. I never expected it to happen."

As Drake closed in on achieving end ranks such as Life and Star, the process started to slow down. He attributed it to a combination of school studies and the time it took to complete the required tasks to reach each rank. Achieving the top rank in Scouting wasn't an easy task for Drake, but he persevered and saw his project to completion.

When he was younger, Drake would spend a lot of time in Black Rock Forest hiking and camping. When it came time to choose a project, he decided to give back. During one of his frequent trips, he noticed a small walkway, on the White Oak Trail, which needed to be cleared and a bridge that had fallen into disrepair. Drake met with forest manager Matt Brady and devised a plan which he presented to the Boy Scout Council in the spring of last year.

Unfortunately, subsequent events forced him to alter his project.

A July 9 rain event, which impacted multiple areas of



Photo contributed

Nicholas Drake earned his Eagle Scout award last month. His project entailed clearing the White Oak Trail and rebuilding a bridge in Black Rock Forest.

Cornwall and Cornwall-on-Hudson, didn't leave out Black Rock Forest. Another bridge was destroyed during the storm, so dismantling what remained of the bridge was added to Drake's project.

With all the changes and approvals set, Drake was ready to start work on his project, but rounding up volunteers proved to be difficult. The first work session, held in the beginning of September, saw about 10 fellow scouts assist in taking apart the two bridges and determining what wood, nails, and screws could be salvaged to rebuild the walkway on the White Oak Trail.

The scouts were also able to clear debris from the walkway.

Drake found it more difficult to find volunteers for the sec-



Nicholas Drake

ond and final work session and he ended up waiting a month to complete the project. While he and the four volunteers made quick work of reassembling the bridge, they had to do so in the pouring rain.

"In the beginning it was

hard," Drake said of taking on a leadership role. "I did have some leadership positions in the troop at that time, but having to plan everything out and do everything, I just wasn't mentally prepared. As the project progressed, I got more comfortable in that position because I had experience leading a large group of people."

The experience, however, helped improve Drake's self confidence as a person, allowing him to be more comfortable when taking on such a burden again.

Drake plans to continue with Scouting, helping out the younger scouts, until he ages out of the program. He's leaving open the possibility of returning as an adult leader from time to time.