

Red Mountain Ranch Up Close

Bringing neighbors closer to their community

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MESA'S TROOP 84 Celebrates Two New Eagle Scouts

By AnnElise Makin

American colors were flown at the Commemorative Air Force Museum in honor of two young men from Mesa's Boy Scout Troop 84.

Scores of friends, family and fellow Boy Scouts celebrated Colton Turner and Will Nemitz, who were promoted to Eagle Scout rank. Special guests were a live Bald Eagle hosted by Liberty Wildlife, as well as hoop dance world champion Brian Hammill, also an Eagle Scout.

Only about five percent of all Boy Scouts in America ascend to the lofty Eagle heights of honor and service. Applicants must have earned a total of 21 merit badges in 12 categories, with first aid, fitness, and community service being just a few. Eagle Scouts must have served in positions of troop leadership, submit letters of recommendations, and conduct a major civic project with detailed documentation.

A TOTAL OF 40 CARE PACKAGES FOR MILITARY IN HAZARDOUS AREAS

"That certainly was the longest shopping trip in my life," Colton joked when describing his Eagle project to the guests. The Red Mountain High School junior had organized the assembly of 40 care packages for U.S. military members in hazardous areas with his *Packages from Home*. The boxes were filled with either nonperishable food items or hygiene and entertainment articles, which he purchased from local stores.

For his project, Colton raised money by selling American car window flags with the help of his younger cousins and brother in Cub Scouts. He obtained a substantial grant from Walmart, and gathered contributions totaling \$1,700 from the Mesa Desert Club and individuals. Altogether, the care package project involved 160 volunteer hours.

On packaging day, Colton instructed the younger scouts precisely on how to fit each item into the mailing boxes. Finally, he delivered the goods to the charity in Phoenix to be shipped to soldiers on duty in Afghanistan and other far off places.

As Colton comes from a long line of military tradition, this project, he said, was special to him. His father, Chuck Turner, also a scoutmaster, as well as his uncle and both grandfathers all served in various branches of the U.S. military.

One day, Colton visited with his brother, Zane's second grade class at Red Mountain Ranch Elementary School. He asked the children in Ms. Moeller's class to write letters to support the soldiers in the field where the packages were going. Colton received a remarkable set of thank you

notes from the soldiers.

"The second letter I got," Colton recalled, "really hit me with the smell of gunpowder and metal when I opened it." Colton collected numerous thank you notes, certificates and even a flag flown over a military unit in Afghanistan for his effort.

"The best thing [in the boxes] was all the letters that the kids made," one soldier wrote. "It made me feel like back at home." With that, Colton realized the rewards of his projects had been so much greater than what he had invested. All the children in Zane's class also received their personal thank you certificate from one unit.

A TRIO OF FABULOUS BENCHES FOR RED MOUNTAIN PARK

Will Nemitz, a sophomore at Mesa Prep Academy, had masterminded an Eagle Scout project of a whole different scope. Thanks to his initiative, Red Mountain Park recently received three splendid and wonderfully versatile park benches.

"After I had the idea for the benches, I drew up the plans in November 2010," Will recounted. He organized a car wash and a garage sale to be able to buy the materials, steel and composite decking for the benches.

When Will submitted his plans to the

installing the structures in the park.

Along the way, Will engaged the skills of various craftsmen. His father, Jeff Nemitz, cut the steel, while assistant scoutmaster Earl Morrow welded the bars together, and assistant scoutmaster Jim Herington powder-coated the frame. The construction crew then dug the postholes and poured the cement. Committee chair Nancy Nemitz, Will's mother, helped in multiple capacities. Finishing the project took just about four hours on a Saturday morning.

Will's professional goal is to become an FBI agent. He should be good in such a role because he can read clues like nobody else. Last year, at the *Solo Hiker* challenge at Camp

Geronimo in Payson, he demonstrated sharp path-finder skills.

In the *Solo* nature skills and orientation game, contestants must locate and retrieve

a hidden box on

a cross-country track by use of a compass only within 12 hours. Barely one out of four contestants usually finishes the race, half of which have to take two tries. Will returned with the box after a record 1 hour and 45 minutes.

Will learned a lot from his Eagle Scout project. "Things take a lot of planning," he realized. "There is a lot more to building benches than I thought, from having the funds raised, to getting estimates on steel."

EAGLE FEATHERS FOR THE SCOUTS

On their day of honor, both Eagle Scouts were awarded American flags of special significance.

Sheri Turner, chartered organization representative for Troop 84, was moved to tears when she handed her son, Colton, a flag, which had flown on the same day over Station Echo in Ad Diwanayah, Iraq, as Colton had his Eagle board of review.

Aunt and godmother Carol Macrorie, who had traveled in from Dallas for the occasion, passed down to Will the flag given to the family upon the death of Will's grandfather to honor his military service in World War II.

As many as 20 Eagle Scouts have graduated through Mesa's Troop 84 since 1996. Among the guests were numerous Eagle Scouts, who applauded Colton and Will, as the Eagle Medal Ceremony concluded the formal celebration. Congratulatory notes and certificates had poured in from many civic leaders.

Finally, champion hoop dancer Brian took the two new Eagles to task. He initiated the juniors into the symbolism of the hoop configurations, and let them practice this rare skill of dance. As Brian explained, many more hoops will come. But on that night, Will and Colton had already been through a few. Soar to new heights! ■



Will Nemitz



Colton Turner



Homeowner's Association, general manager Don DeBaca was instantly supportive of adding new features to the popular neighborhood park. The location of the structures soon was approved.

As documented in his comprehensive book, Will obtained various quotes for steel prices. His helpers clocked altogether 252 volunteer hours preparing and assembling the benches at Will's house, as well as

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