

What does it mean to be an Eagle Scout?

Excerpt from the Eagle ceremony acceptance speech by Evan Schulz

The 105th Eagle Scout from Troop 75

January 8, 2012

When I first started Boy Scouts so many years ago, my Scoutmaster asked me "What does it mean to be an Eagle Scout?" Being so young I didn't really know how to answer that question. Without realizing it, from that day until this one, I had been learning the answer little by little.

A lesson of this magnitude can only be taught through time and personal experience. While camping with friends and honing my skills earning merit badges, I found myself. I looked up to others and saw the best they had to offer. I took a piece of everyone that helped me along the trail to Eagle. So this I what I have learned, and what being an Eagle means to me.

An Eagle Scout is not just a uniform or an award, and no, it is not someone who's sole purpose in life is just to help little old ladies cross the street (although that is one of the perks of the job). An Eagle Scout is a person. An Eagle Scout is a friend, a scholar, a mentor, a shoulder to lean on, and hand to be lent to the broken, downtrodden, and lost. An Eagle Scout should exemplify all of the best that humanity has to offer, because an Eagle Scout should be just that, an example. Just like how I bettered myself by observing people around me, I hope to serve as a model for others.

In Judaism, we are taught to do a mitzvah, or good deed, whenever possible. I believe that this is an act that can transcend all languages and religions. Sophocles once said that "Shameful deeds are taught by shameful deeds." If this is true, then so is the opposite. By performing a mitzvah to whomever possible, whenever possible, we can change each other and in doing so, the world.

When I asked the Temple how I could help them for my Eagle Scout project, they said that the front lawn needed to be landscaped. Together we came up with the idea for an interfaith sitting garden that the whole community could use. I liked this idea for a project because it not only let me help out the Temple, but Cranford as a whole.

Interfaith projects are important because only through equality can humanity ever hope to progress. Growing up in public schools, I ran into occasional teasing because of being Jewish. I often times cracked a quick joke back and shrugged it off. Later I would go home and wonder why some people would see me as a Jew first instead of just Evan. My hopes for this Eagle Scout project are to not only help bridge the way towards more interfaith tolerance, but more equality in general.

Humanity started out in a garden, change can too.

Thank you everyone.