

Scout finds helping is in his nature

By Max Zimbart



San Pedro teenager Liam Cordero has earned the rank of Eagle Scout by completing a project where he sent care packages to troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Service is in Liam Cordero's DNA.

The San Pedro teenager led an effort to supply and ship more than 100 boxes of toiletries to American soldiers stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan last summer.

It was his Eagle Scout project - the last step toward achieving the highest rank in the Boy Scouts. Liam will attain the rank officially during a ceremony today Feb. 8.

"I've always been inspired by the military," said the 15-year-old Liam. "For the project - I thought, 'What can I do for them?'"

Liam began researching soldiers' needs and found they lacked certain toiletries, he said. Soldiers had access to items like toothpaste and soap while stationed abroad, but lacked other things.

"They had pretty basic things," Liam said. "So we gave them things like shavers, shaving cream, shampoo and conditioner."

As a final project, would-be Eagle Scouts submit a written plan for approval by the Scout leader, district representative and benefiting organization.

Liam chose to aid the military out of a sense of national pride, he said.

Scouting "has given me a sense of patriotism, and a great love for the country," Liam said. "I hope to one day join the military ... maybe as an officer."

Liam's family has been in the Boy Scouts of America for the last four generations, and its community service dates back to early ancestors in Spanish-controlled California, said Liam's father, William Cordero. The family worked in the Santa Ynez Mission, outside Santa Barbara, in the early 19th century, and later ancestors joined the Union calvary and were stationed in Wilmington during the Civil War.

Liam's grandfather was in the Air Force and killed during the Vietnam War. Though they never met, Liam sees him as a role model.

"He is my mentor," he said. "He was an Eagle Scout, too."

Liam sent out fliers and e-mails asking for donations and detailing the project's purpose. He sought donations from his high school, church, friends, family, and their co-workers and companies.

He enlisted friends to help pack boxes and, if they didn't know before, "they know now that I have a lot of perseverance," Liam said.

A freshman at St. John Bosco High in Bellflower, Liam played football and is trying out for the track team. He's involved with the car and beach club at school and his favorite classes are history and Japanese, he said.

"He's always had leadership skills," his father said. "And helping others is just his nature."