As proud family and fellow Scouts looked on, Dustin Wieland became the latest Boy Scout from Holyoke Troop 32 to earn his Eagle rank at a special Court of Honor on Sunday, Jan. 18 at the Lions Den in Holyoke.

Scoutmaster Glen Fricke gave the Eagle Charge to Wieland. The Eagle rank is one of the highest awards that can be achieved in the Boy Scout program, and it marks many years of achievement and effort on the part of the recipient.

Wieland is the 18-year-old son of Jack and Celeste Wieland of Holyoke. According to him, he has had the Eagle ranking since October, but it did not feel official until the ceremony on Sunday.

The court began with the ceremonial candle lighting. When a boy becomes a Scout, there is instilled within him something called the spirit of Scouting. One lighted candle represented that spirit.

Twenty-one other candles were also lit during the program, signifying the 12 points of the Scout Law, three points of the Scout Oath and six ranks of Scouting.

Fricke served as master of ceremonies during the Court of Honor. Others speaking during the ceremony were Ken Hazlit, Great Plains area executive for the Longs Peak Council, and Stephen Bohrer. Bohrer also took pictures of the Court of Honor for the Wieland family, to which the new Eagle said he is very grateful for.

Wieland and his father Jack then gave a presentation on the family's history in the scouting program and its ceremonies, and described Wieland's Eagle service project.

Fellow scouts who participated in Wieland's Court of Honor included Doug Moss and Jason Borland. Former scoutmaster Dan Kafka was there as well, and he and Fricke each received a special memorial knife from Wieland.

Wieland began his scouting program in the sixth grade as a Tenderfoot. Over the years, he has earned 22 merit badges, which is one more than the 21 needed to become an Eagle Scout.

Required merit badges include citizenship, fitness, environment, camping/outdoor activities, first aid and emergency preparedness. There are other optional merit badges a Scout can receive as well.

Last year, Wieland completed the final service project needed to attain his Eagle Rank by putting in large cement blocks at the Lions Club Fishing Pond. The blocks were placed in the water along the south side of the pond so anglers can fish along the edge without having to tangle with the bushes and weeds along the shore.

As Wieland explained it, the chosen projects have to be approved by the Longs Peak Council. The project has to have an impact on the community, and there is a required amount of hours the Scout must put into the project.

For the 18-year-old Scout, Sunday's ceremony was bittersweet. "It was nice to finally receive the rank," he said, "but at the same time I know I've gone as far as I can. Now it's time for me to help the younger generation of Scouts."

He added, "It was nice to have all my friends and family there. I usually see them in different settings, not all together in one place."

For Wieland, joining the Boy Scouts is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and he encourages young boys to give it a try. He said there is a lot of hard work involved, but it also provides an opportunity for fun. He specifically mentioned how much he enjoyed the camp outs, especially at Chimney Rock in Wyoming.

"If you look at the statistics," he pointed out, "many important people like astronauts and presidents were Eagle Scouts."