

Commitment is key for Duke of Edinburgh Award winner



By Jeff Doner

For over a year, 18-year-old Maggie Riehle dedicated her time, effort and skills into the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and has finally accomplished the silver level of achievement.

At an awards banquet over the weekend, Maggie and others were presented with their silver awards.

"I'm very excited and almost nervous," she said prior to the event. "The Duke of Edinburgh silver awards was a year of my life and it had so many big opportunities and things that just sort of led my life pathway in a different direction. It's kind of like the final completing moment of recognizing what I've done and how I've changed as a person. It's just an exciting and nerve-racking moment and I can't wait."

In order to achieve silver status, each person had to complete a series of tasks in each category of community service, adventurous journey, skill and physical recreation.

Riehle said it was hard deciding what she would take on for such a big commitment.

"Before choosing you have to realize that it's going to be a year commitment, so you have to really take the time and choose something that you'll really enjoy," she said.

For community service, she volunteered at the Kingsway Arms Retirement Home for a year and a half, for which she was eventually hired and still works there.

Her skill was taking driving instructions from a police officer and for the physical activity she ended up again finding a passion.

"I trained for a half marathon and completed a half marathon throughout that year and that was amazing as well," she said. "My dad runs and he has always wanted me to run, so I figured why not take this up? I ended up enjoying it more than I thought, so I did a half marathon."

However it was on her adventurous journey that she said she really had to dig deep.

Riehle embarked on a five day canoe trip in Algonquin Park with a group of people that were also participating in the Duke of Edinburgh Awards.

She said it was easily the most challenging of all her tasks.

"There are so many factors that are going against you," she explained. "You are put into this group of people that you have never

met before, so there's that challenge to be comfortable with everyone because you're going to be spending the next five days with everyone.

?But then there's also the challenge against the wildlife, portaging and thunderstorms when you're in the middle of the lake and you have to quickly get off. It was quite the challenge, but that was honestly the most amazing group of people that I have met and we still talk to each other even though it was a year and a half ago. The friendships I made are incredible.?

Now that she is done high school, Riehle is heading off to the University of Ottawa to pursue a degree in communications and therefore won't be looking to take the next step into gold status.

She said she would have loved to take it on and encouraged others to get involved in the program if they are looking for a life changing experience.

?I would fully recommend it, but I would tell them that they have to realize it is a huge commitment,? she said. ?When you're through a half a year and you're getting tired, you just have to pick yourself up and say there's only a half year more and think of what this will do for me as a person. You'll learn so much from so many people. It's just an amazing opportunity.?