

The silver medal scout

Meet Gabriel Escobar: taekwondo silver medalist, Eagle Scout and PCHS graduate

BY JAMIE KERNER
Not many people have accomplished what Gabriel Escobar has at such a young age.

While in middle school, Escobar placed second worldwide in an international taekwondo competition. More recently, the Port Chester High School graduate has received his Eagle Scout rank, the most prestigious honor and achievement attainable by a Boy Scout.

was more advanced than the others his age, Escobar competed in the 16-year-old black belt category and ultimately came in second place.

Escobar says that he loves every aspect of the martial art.

"I love what it teaches you, it teaches you a lot of discipline," Escobar said. "I love the environment there, I love the people. You make so many friends, long-lasting relationships."

the United States achieve.

To become an Eagle Scout, Boy Scouts must complete a service project. For his project, Escobar chose to restore St. Peter's Episcopal Church, located at 19 Smith St. in Port Chester.

"For an Eagle Scout, I needed to do something big," Escobar said. "I saw the church with my dad and I saw it was really rundown and kind of rusty."

Thinking there was more potential for the church, Escobar was inspired to use his project as an opportunity to restore the sacred structure.

"It was a symbol of the community," Escobar said. "It hasn't been restored for over 50 years and it's a nationally known church, so I thought it was very important."

With the help of his dad and brothers, he cleaned and polished a lot of the wood at the church, specifically in the sanctuary. Escobar said the project was more time-consuming than difficult and it took him about a week to complete, spending about six hours a day working on it. When he finished the project, he said the church looked beautiful and he felt like a huge weight was lifted off his shoulders.

Escobar, a member of the Port Chester High School Class of 2018, will attend the University of Michigan-Flint in the fall. There, he plans to study mechanical engineering and also hopes to compete on a taekwondo team.

When deciding on what college to attend, Escobar said he was drawn to University of Michigan's size, sports teams, student energy and engineering program.

"The field of engineering is really interesting to me, like it tests your brain," he said. "And mechanical engineering, you're working with a lot of cars, mobile vehicles specifically. It seems really interesting to me. I really want to see how that works." Though



Terrace Avenue resident Gabriel Escobar becomes an Eagle Scout during a ceremony at Camp Seton in Greenwich after restoring part of St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Port Chester. The Port Chester High School graduate will be studying engineering at the University of Michigan-Flint beginning this fall.

COURTESY OF DANIELA ESCOBAR

he is sad about leaving behind his friends and family when he goes off to college, he is also excited at the same time because he knows

he will always come back home. "I know I'll be back," Escobar said. "I'm always (going to be) be a Port Chester kid."



Port Chester High School graduate Gabriel Escobar earns second-place in an international taekwondo competition in South Korea in 2013.

COURTESY OF DANIELA ESCOBAR

Escobar began taekwondo when he was five years old, solely due to a decision made by his mom.

"She told me I was going to go to a toy store, ended up there," he said. "But I loved it, it was really fun."

Escobar was a natural at taekwondo, and when he was 13, he became the youngest third degree black belt at his taekwondo school, Grand Master Byung Min Kim's Tae Kwon Do School in Port Chester.

That same year, Escobar traveled to South Korea to compete in the 7th World Taekwondo Culture Expo Competition. Because he

Four years later, Escobar is once again achieving things of great status, as he became an Eagle Scout in February.

"You become an Eagle Scout after you complete all of the requirements in Boy Scouts, and then the Eagle Scout is the highest rank in Boy Scouts," Escobar, who first joined the Boy Scouts six years ago, explained. Escobar was originally part of Troop 1, but after a merger, he became a member of Troop 35 in Greenwich.

According to Escobar, becoming an Eagle Scout is an accomplishment and privilege that only three percent of the Boy Scouts in