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NEWS RELEASE

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Eagle Scout Candidate Creates Nature Backpacks for Library

ELMHURST, IL — Adventure backpacks, available to borrow at Elmhurst Public Library, may inspire you to listen a little more closely to songbirds, gaze through a magnifying glass at rocks and minerals, or even identify animal tracks.

Discovering and exploring the outdoors with friends or family is a hands-on sensory experience that appeals to all ages. The backpacks, part of a community partnership between the Library and Boy Scout Troop #82, were created by Elmhurst resident Jake Downey, 16, an Eagle Scout candidate.

Downey, a sophomore at York High School, says he's loved nature and the outdoors since he first joined Cub Scouts at age six. "I grew passionate about everything Scouting—the camping, the hiking, and the sense that you were making a difference to help the community," he says.

Downey says working with Elmhurst Public Library was an ideal fit for his Eagle Scout service project. He says he has fond memories of attending storytimes and browsing the shelves for books as a small child. As he got older, he served as a Library volunteer. "The Library was a big part of my childhood and I am thrilled to give back in some way," he says.

"Jake did a stellar job of taking this project and running with it," says Marcy Rodriguez, Assistant Director of Elmhurst Public Library. "He put his team together, doled out responsibilities, and managed the many details and logistics of this multi-faceted project. It was a pleasure working with him. Now, because of his hard work, Library patrons have the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors—while

using these adventure backpacks as a starting point to delve deeper into learning about and exploring nature.”

Paul Rodgers, Scoutmaster and Eagle Scout Coach for Troop 82 says the rank of Eagle Scout is reached by only four percent of Boy Scouts. Eagle Scout service projects are designed to teach conceptualizing, planning, budgeting, and leadership skills, all learned while creating something beneficial for the community.

“Jake did well throughout this process by leading every step along the way,” says Rodgers. “He engaged in healthy and regular communication with his volunteers and the Library. He also learned new skills such as video making and broadcast formats. Ultimately, he contributed to a worthy cause and helped a community anchor.”

Each colorful backpack contains items based on a theme: geocaching, aquatics, animals, plants, rocks and minerals, and Elmhurst history. Each bag may be checked out for one week, with up to two renewals. Extended loan time for vacation may be requested. Instructional videos for the backpacks may be viewed on the Library’s YouTube page.

“Similar to our Library of Extraordinary Things collection, which include kitchen, craft, and tech items, this new collection encourages learning through action and engagement with others,” says Rodriguez.

“My main hope for these backpacks is that it will inspire people to venture into the outdoors to learn more about the world around us,” says Downey. “The natural world is a fascinating place that offers a lot to explore.”

For more information, visit elmlib.org/adventure.