

Pinckney Scout earns praise for actions

By Leanne Smith, The Livingston Community News, December 19, 2008

Nathan Hinkle is no stranger to the Boy Scout oath.

Thankfully to Pinckney's Suzanne Gordon, the parts about "doing his best, helping others at all times and keeping himself physically strong and mentally awake" came quite naturally when he found her early one slippery morning last February.



Suzanne Gordon, left, found herself trapped in a flooding car after an accident on County Road D-19 last February until Nathan Hinkle, right, came along to help. Hinkle has received a national certificate of merit from the Boy Scouts of America. (PHOTO COURTESY, PINCKNEY BOY SCOUT TROOP NO. 312)

Gordon's car had spun on a sharp curve on County Road D-19 at Rush Lake Road and plunged over a steep bank where it landed on the driver's side and started to flood with icy water.

"I saw Nathan's face in the passenger door window and he was knocking and asking if I needed help," Gordon said. "I said, 'Yes, I do,' and I was so relieved to see him."

Hinkle, 17, of Pinckney and a member of Pinckney Boy Scout Troop No. 312, was on his way to school at Howell's Kensington Woods High School when

he saw Gordon's tire marks going over the bank. He urged his mom to stop the car and he headed down to Gordon.

"I was less than a mile from home, but I felt very far away by myself down in that ditch," Gordon said. "Nathan has a very special place in my heart. What a hero he is."

The Boy Scouts of America agree. The group recently awarded Hinkle with a National Certificate of Merit for his actions that day. It's the first national award the Pinckney troop has ever received.

"It's one of the highest honors you can get in scouting," said Chuck Thibodeau, Troop 312 scoutmaster. "It's for going above and beyond the call of duty. We are so proud of Nathan."

Hinkle is a little overwhelmed with the attention.

"I just did what any good person would do," he said. "It was pretty bad that morning. It was just a natural reaction to stop."

Gordon had left home at about 6:30

a.m. on Feb. 19 to head to I-96 on her way to Novi to baby-sit her granddaughter.

"It was bad," she said. "The road was snow covered and slick and I thought maybe I shouldn't take it, but I did. Before I knew it, my car was spinning around. I didn't have any control."

Gordon's car went backwards over the ditch and landed on the driver's side. That was bad enough, she said, but then frigid water started covering her feet and legs.

"I fumbled for my cell phone, which was floating by then," she said. "Everything was in slow motion. I didn't really know what to do."

Hinkle helped Gordon out of the car's passenger-side door and got her back up the bank.

"I put her in our car with my mom, my sister and me so she could warm up and wait for the police and a friend to arrive," Hinkle said. "I'm just glad we were there."

Hinkle, who will graduate in June and hopes to attend Lake Superior State University to study biology, also recently achieved the rank of Eagle Scout, scouting's highest.

For his service project, he put three benches and historical markers on the Lakelands Trail in Hamburg Township.

Reach Leanne Smith at lsmith@livingstoncommunitynews.com.