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E'town junior notches perfect 36 on ACT exam

By Katherine Knott

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Jake Burks Breunig, a junior at Elizabethtown High School, doesn't like to brag.



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Jake Burks Breunig, a junior at Elizabethtown High School.

So when he found out by mail last week he had scored a perfect 36 on the ACT, which students across the state took in March, he didn't shout it from the rooftops, so to speak.

In fact, as of Friday, he said not many people knew about his achievement.

"It's weird to bring it up in conversation," he said.

Breunig now is part of a select group of students who achieve perfection on the college admissions exam. He said working hard in school and taking the hardest classes and friendly competition among classmates who pushed one another prepared him the most.

According to www.prepscholar.com, for instance, in 2015 less than a tenth of 1 percent of all students who took the ACT scored a 36. In all, there were 2,235 of the test-takers to earn a 36. More than 1.9 million students took the exam in 2015.

Breunig has taken the ACT twice before during his freshman and sophomore years. He had scored a 34 and 35 on those tests, respectively.

The questions on the ACT are random, so he didn't know what specific information the test would ask him. Breunig said he was lucky with the questions on the test.

"To get that 36, the test has to be the perfect test," he said. "There's a part where everything has to come together."

Breunig, whose favorite subject is math, said a key to the math section of the exam is using a calculator.

"Everything on ACT can be answered with a calculator," he said.

The ACT tests on English, math, reading and science. Breunig said his high school teachers gave him the skills for the exam, but he also thanked all of his teachers for pushing him throughout his academic career.

But it's not just teachers who contributed to his success.

"In terms of reading, I want to give (credit) to my mom," he said. "She taught me how to read."

When Breunig isn't in the classroom, he's involved in sports and clubs. He swims for the school and a local club team. He also runs cross country.

He's a member of Elizabethtown High School Student Council, Beta club and VEX Robotics.

"I just like to be busy," he said. "I don't like to sit around and do nothing."

Breunig said he's involved with the school to make it better, and it also has made him a better student.

"It's easier to do well in classes because you have a stake in the school," he said. "It's motivation."

As a junior, he doesn't know where he'll attend college, but he knows he wants to major in computer science. He's the head programmer for the school's VEX Robotics team.

Breunig might make school look easy, but there are challenges such as staying motivated during the third quarter from December to March.

"It can feel like there's no end in sight," he said.

Swimming helps to keep him going during the third quarter, he said.

At the end of the day, Breunig unwinds by watching TV, specifically "Modern Family," or listening to music. He upgraded to Spotify Premium, so he can listen to whatever music he wants whenever.

Right now, he has been listening to "Location" by Khalid.

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