

Eagle goal of lifetime

Continued from 13A

almost 30-minute trek across town to meetings. Over the years, Brandon grew to love it. When Walker came home for work, she often found Brandon on the porch in full uniform waiting for her.

"Mother and son would meet other troop members at Glenwood APR Church on Freedom Drive. Brandon chose that troop because it had a reputation for hard work. Walker chose the troop because they had a long history of family involvement.

"I didn't want to just drop him off," she said. "I wanted to know what they were teaching him. So most times I would stay. I wanted my son to grow up to be a good

man."

Eleven years later, Brandon has achieved that goal. He has almost 200 trophies, plaques and certificates — so many that the family didn't have enough space for them all in the living room. They had to move them into a bonus room, where they take up all of the floor and a majority of the walls.

But that's OK, both say.

"I guess I'm just lucky," Brandon says. "My friends come over here are so amazed. They ask me how I do everything."

And there are more awards to come. Brandon still attends Scout meetings and is active in DECA, sports a 3.0 grade point average

and plays in the band. He's active in St. Paul's youth missionary group and serves as president of the Youth Usher Board. He also plays on Independence's varsity football team.

He says he can't wait for the state playoffs. The team made it to the second round last year.

"We're going to do it this year," he says. "We're going all the way."

Brandon has also been asked by his church to help with its Boy Scout troop. Several parents have even asked him to serve as a role model for their sons.

He takes it all in stride.

"I am really lucky," he says. "Just really lucky."

Nation's enrollment increases

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The number of children attending America's schools will reach a record 52.2 million this year, and the largest increase is among teen-agers, federal officials said Thursday.

The trend is expected to continue through 2007 when enrollment in public and private schools is expected to peak at 54.3 million — with states like California, Arizona, Nevada and North Carolina seeing the biggest growth.

An increase of 7.6 percent is expected in the Tarheel State. The bulk of the increase will be seen in the Research Triangle and Mecklenburg County.

School districts "need to be thinking long-term and building schools," warned Education Secretary Richard Riley. "These young people will build and lead this country in the next millennium and we owe it to ourselves and our country to help them get ready."

Some students already are feeling the pinch.

Ray Henderson, principal of Miramar High School in Broward County, Fla., said morale among students is declining as bathroom lines get longer, parking spaces become scarce and students arrive to class late because of crowding in hallways.

"Students are relegated to becoming crowds as opposed to individuals," said Henderson. "We need to decide the importance of educating our youngsters ... It's a patriotic responsibility."

According to an Education Department report released Thursday, the 52.2 million children attending school this fall will be an increase of 800,000 over last year.

The largest share of the growth is coming among teen-agers, officials said, because enrollment among elementary students increased from fall 1985 to fall 1997.

The report said that from this fall until 2007, public schools can expect a 13 percent increase in grades 9-12, a 5 percent increase in grades 6-8 and a 1 percent decrease in grades 1-5.

California has the largest projected increase in public high schools for the next decade at 35 percent. North Carolina follows at 27 percent, Arizona at 25 percent, Nevada at 24 percent, Massachusetts at 23 percent and Rhode Island at 21 percent, according to the report.

To cope with the influx, Riley said that in the next decade about 6,000 additional schools need to be built and about 2 million more teachers need to be hired — 260,000 to 300,000 in California alone.

He said that while there is no shortage of teachers in the country, there is a shortage of well-trained faculty who are teaching in their chosen fields, and many schools may need more teachers in specific subjects such as math and science.

"We can't expect to raise the academic standards while lowering teacher standards just so we can put an adult in front of every classroom," said Riley.

The report cited several rea-

sons for the rising enrollments: immigration; a delay in marriage and child-bearing among baby boomers; minorities, especially Hispanics, have higher birth rates than whites and therefore Hispanics are fast becoming the largest segment of the enrollment population; and students staying in school longer.

Doris Alvarez, principal of Hoover High School in San Diego, Calif., said her school already has reached its full capacity at 1,900 students, more than half of them Hispanic. But she said she expects at least 700 more students in the next five years.

"This will severely affect the personalization that we've

attempted to create at our high school," said Alvarez.

She said the school also will not be able to provide adequate lunch rooms, gymnasiums and science technology laboratories.

Henderson, the Florida high school principal, expects his school to file for "critically overcrowded" status within the next three or five years. Enrollment is expected to grow from 2,065 this year to 2,700 by 2002.

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Around Charlotte is
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