

road to REPAIR

SENIOR WILLIS WIEST REFURBISHES CAR, FROM START TO FINISH

Usually, when your car breaks down, you take it to the mechanic. But senior **Willis Wiest** is not the typical student driver.

“My dad grew up refurbishing cars, so he’s been my teacher in all of this, and I have a lot of car people in my family, so I was just kind of born into this culture,” Wiest said.

Wiest has refurbished many cars, the most recent being the car he drives currently, a 1967 Jeep CJ5.

“The car had a lot of issues,” Wiest said. “It wouldn’t run, and it wouldn’t stay running. It didn’t have brakes, lights or headlights or a turn signal or anything that really worked on it. Luckily, the engine was OK.”

To start the process of fixing the car, Wiest did what he considers the basics.

“[We] went through and checked the spark plugs, changed the wires and checked the brakes because you want safety first, and luckily the brakes were fine,” Wiest said. “[After that] we went through and re-did the wiring, which basically involved ripping out everything that was in there.”

After checking all the basics, Wiest fixed and made improvements to the car.

“I put in seat belts, I put in turn signals and then I rebuilt the transmission,” Wiest said. “The transmission came a little later.”

The entire goal of checking everything in the car was to figure



out why the car’s cylinders were misfiring at high RPMS.

“We had to go through a bunch of little things, and we eventually figured out it was the coil, which is a very rare thing to

go wrong,” Wiest said.

After fixing the car, it became Wiest’s go-to car, and he now drives it to and from school every day.

“I remember one time I got stuck at school [after the car was fixed] because the distributor was cracked,” Wiest said. “I had spent the whole day trying to get the car started, but I ended up having to get a ride home because I couldn’t get it to start. I came back later, and we replaced the spark plugs, and luckily that was just enough spark to get it to run. But it turned out it still didn’t run well enough to get it home. I broke down on Koenig, and my dad had to push me into a parking lot. I was eventually able to get home, but the whole day was an interesting experience.”

The entire process of refurbishing the car took Wiest four months, and upon finishing, Wiest started fixing another car, a 1969 Jeepster Commando. He said he’d love to continue fixing cars as a hobby.

“The most rewarding part of the entire experience was hearing it come to life, and just going ‘ah, finally,’” Wiest said. “All the hard work you put in, all the bloody fingers and painful moments finally paid off.”