



Spartan Garage Restores '68 Dodge Super Bee for Annual Raffle

If there's one word to describe the "Spartan Garage" in upstate New York during this 2020-21 school year, it's CHANGE. For their 16th raffle car, the high school automotive technology program, known as the Spartan Garage, is restoring a 1968 Dodge Coronet "Super Bee." It's the first MOPAR in 16 builds/restorations for the program.

Another change, running the auto tech program during COVID-19, has certainly caused challenges requiring students to participate in a combination of in person and remote learning, which is typically computer-based. The pandemic has wreaked havoc on ordering parts and shipping times.

There's also a new teacher leading the Spartan Garage at East Syracuse Minoa Central High School. Michael Edmunds is now the automotive technology teacher.

Teacher Ryan Beckley left for an unbelievable opportunity as an Assistant Professor in the Applied Technology Department at Onondaga Community College after 20 years with the school district. Mr. Beckley led 15 car/truck raffles that gave

hundreds of students hands-on experience. He is helping with this year's raffle to complete a smooth transition.

However, the Spartan Garage program is in capable hands with Mr. Edmunds. He is a 2004 graduate of the program and was a student of Mr. Beckley's. During and after college, Mr. Edmunds worked in several auto shops. He then spent nine years with Toyota and most recently served nearly three years as the high school automotive technology teacher in the nearby Institute of Technology at Syracuse City Schools.

"This year has been a challenge diving into a new teaching job at a different school during a pandemic and taking over an auto program and a raffle car, but my reward is giving these students opportunities for the future," Mr. Edmunds said. "I'm just taking it one day at a time."

The 1968 Dodge Coronet "Super Bee" was discovered at the Syracuse Nationals. A vote on social media determined it would be painted "Turbine Bronze" by East Syracuse Chevrolet. It will have a 727 Automatic Transmission that has been rebuilt by Ray Miller with help from students. The 440 cubic inch big block engine was built by Bloss Machine.

A digital dash will be a unique addition and it will also have air conditioning. Many local businesses help with the annual raffle car project donating or discounting parts and labor.

"This car came with nothing in it and barely anything parts wise. We've watched this car evolve from a bucket of bolts. Our biggest help has been the internet. The community MOPAR has created online and even in our very own neighborhood is pretty awesome," Mr. Edmunds said.

"We connected with Joe Litwin and Ed Zak of Litwin Mechanical Services in Buffalo. These

guys have great advice and valuable experience as well as some very hard to find parts. They believe that this is a great beneficial opportunity for youth,” Mr. Edmunds said.

Students are excited to be working on a MOPAR vehicle this year. Despite COVID-19, they appreciate the time they are able to spend learning in person at the Spartan Garage, which is two days a week.

“I love this class. This class is relaxed and not all book work — it’s a lot of hands on and that’s how I learn best. I enjoy working on cars and working with people that I like hanging out with,” said senior Colin Decker.

In addition to the raffle project car, students work on hundreds of “live” vehicles for customers every year that are back on the road when they leave the garage.

The annual raffle funds the following year’s project vehicle. Proceeds also support graduating students who are motivated and driven, whether they are headed to the military, workforce, or college.

“Usually we had to rush to get the car to look good for the car shows. With COVID, there are no shows. We can take our time and have the car fully ready to go at the end instead of having little things to do,” explained senior Paul Hughes.

“It’s more of a challenge to get parts in. It’s a challenge to get students here in person. It’s a challenge not having car shows to sell tickets. But it’s a hands on class and it’s not boring. The neat part is when it’s done — to look at it and go ‘wow’ we did that in 10 months,” said senior Matt Krusse.

Raffle ticket information and more photos are available on the Spartan Garage’s website at www.spartangarage.org or by contacting

technology teacher Mike Edmunds at medmunds@esmschools.org or 315-434-3313.

To order by mail, raffle tickets are \$10 each, 3 for \$25 or 15 for \$100. Write checks payable to ESM Spartan Garage Booster Club or “ESM SGBC” and mail to: East Syracuse Minoa CHS, Attn: Spartan Garage Car Raffle, c/o Mike Edmunds, 6400 Fremont Rd., East Syracuse, NY 13057. The raffle drawing is July 18.

In addition, the ESM Spartan Garage Booster Club is a group of dedicated parents and supporters that assists with the raffle.

