

# FIXING A broken heart

Jeremiah Travis tries to learn more about his heart condition to help himself and, eventually, other people. (Story by M. Leath)

Two years ago, Jeremiah Travis sat in the hospital waiting room, thinking about his next surgery. Travis, an eighth grader, was born without one of



the most important parts of the body.

"When I was born, [some of] my arteries were gone and, since they weren't there, I couldn't function," he said. "Arteries bring blood and oxygen to the rest of the body."

He goes in for checkups yearly and has had three open-heart surgeries due to his tetralogy of fallot with pulmonary atresia. His last transplant was about two years ago. When doing transplants, doctors use a deceased person's arteries.

"They don't grow, so I have to go in a lot to get them aired

up or replace them with new ones," Travis said.

Having major surgery can be scary, but Travis said he used to "freak out" before having a procedure. He hopes learning more about his condition will help him overcome those fears in the future.

"My cardiologist helped me understand what happened and what they did and what previous surgeries they did," Travis said. "Now that I have a better understanding of it, I will be less afraid of going into the surgeries."

Travis wanted to do military,

sports, and police, but his condition limits him in such activities.

"I'm different I guess, it sucks and I don't like it," Travis said. "I don't like that I'm not like other people. It affects me physically, and sometimes it feels as if I can't do things other people can."

Travis said he wants to get into medicine to help people and maybe even invent artificial arteries.

"I would very much like to get into it," Travis said. "I enjoy doing science so I was thinking about getting into medical work and help others."

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