

Fordson students creating hot rod 'FEAR'

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DEARBORN — Fordson High School hopes to put FEAR on the road with a new hot rod that hundreds of students will help design, build and market.

To be a success, though, the project needs public and corporate support, said teacher Guy Pizzino.

Pizzino, who teaches manufacturing classes such as machine shop and welding, had the idea for using his students, and those in Mark Kent's auto shop classes, to build a kit car. The project also will reach into other classes, stretching across seven departments.



Fordson High Manufacturing Instructor Guy Pizzino (right) and his students surround the beginnings of their new hot rod Friday that hundreds of students will help design, build and market. The Fordson Energy Alternative Roadster (FEAR) will run on E85 fuel. It will be a combination of low-slung hot rod and Model T. Marketing students will help promote the car. Art and graphic students will help with the design and detailing, and may create paraphernalia such as T-shirts to promote and fund the project. Business students will use the car's development to create a mock business plan. (Photo by Millard Berry/ P& G)

Marketing students will help promote the car. Art and graphic students will help with the design and detailing and may create paraphernalia such as T-shirts to promote and fund the project. Business students will use the car's development to create a mock business plan. Other students will take photos and video of the construction to use in promoting the vehicle and on a Web site about the project, Pizzino said.

The vehicle will be built over two semesters and then, hopefully, raffled off, raising enough money to build another car, he said. The district is still working out the legal issues of raffling a student-built vehicle, but the car will be road ready when it is done.

Only a few weeks into the spring semester, students are already at work on the project.

Marketing students helped create the name. The Fordson Energy Alternative Roadster (FEAR) will run on E85 fuel. It will be a combination of low-slung hot rod and Model T. The Model T is part of how the car will connect back to Fordson's roots and its strong connection to Ford Motor Co., Pizzino said.

"We are trying to stay sort of true to our mascot," he said, referring to a painting of a fierce Fordson tractor mascot on the wall of the shop room.

To do that, other changes could be made to the kit car, such as having a front exhaust stack.

"We are looking for sponsors," Pizzino said.

Principal Youssef Mossalam was able to get grants for most of the estimated \$20,000 to \$25,000 cost of the project.

"We've got the biggest chunk. The more sponsors, the more extras we can add," Pizzino said.

Donations from the community will be accepted, and he hopes to get companies involved. For example, Ford could donate an engine or Belle Tire could provide nicer rims and tires.

Pizzino said the idea for the car came from the number of students who watch shows about customizing vehicles, like Orange County Choppers.

"We are getting a lot of kids asking us about the different shows that are on," Pizzino said.

A larger project where students could see tangible results sounded exciting and would provide students interesting entries for their resumes, Pizzino said.

"To work on little widgets isn't as much fun," he admitted.

Drawing so many areas into the project will also give students practical experience communicating with others outside their usual cohorts.

The base of the car will be a kit vehicle by Nehr Speedcraft.

Company partners Dave Nedock and Tom Kuhr will also help students with the project.

Nedock is a retired Ford engineer and can offer students direction with the actual construction, Pizzino said. Kuhr has an extensive background in marketing, graphics and technical writing. Both are looking forward to helping students, Pizzino said.

The project should also provide students with more real-world experience that can transfer to larger projects later.

“The basics of the suspension are the same from a buggy all the way to the Corvette,” he said.

For now, a frame sits to the side of his class with the body sitting on top.

Two tires are zip-tied on and an engine rests on top. The engine and tires belong to Kent and are just for show for now.

Students will also take parts of the kits to practice their welding skills and to create some of the joints and other components from scratch, Pizzino said.

Best of all, students are excited to learn.

“They like it. They are starting to get excited,” Pizzino said.

“It should be fun,” he added.

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