

Serving Dearborn and Dearborn Heights since 1918  
Saturday, June 04, 2011

By Katie Hetrick  
Press & Guide Newspapers  
DEARBORN

## **Fordson High School students are cruising in their work to make a road-ready hot rod.**

The Fordson Energy Alternative Roadster (FEAR) now has a frame, wheels and part of a body. Students are nearing the end of their first semester working on the kit car. Teachers hope to have the project completed by the end of next February so they can show it off at Detroit Autorama, a custom car show.



“I think it’s awesome. It gives a chance for students to come together and build a real hot rod,” said freshman Scott Salwa. His older brother, Kenny, a senior, is also part of the project, and he admits there is a lot of car talk at home these days.

“It’s just a great project. I’m glad Dearborn allowed us to do it,” Salwa said.

Tom Kuhr with Nehr Speedcraft said the company’s kit cars have found a niche market in schools.

“In terms of an education platform, a kit car has turned into a valuable asset for people who want to do hands on learning,” Kuhr said.

The simplified cars are easier to assemble, but still help students understand the fundamentals of how a car works from its suspension to its drive train.

“A modern car has all the same elements,” Kuhr said.

And building a car from the ground up, even with prefabricated parts, is a lot more fun.

“It also has a cool factor,” Kuhr admitted.

“This is great because it offers a lot of different learning opportunities at every turn,” said auto shop teacher Mark Kent. He squatted behind the car explaining the differential on the back axle to some students who had stayed after school on the half day.

“Now they want to listen to me. It’s not like in class,” Kent said.

Zahraa Alakashi took a manufacturing class at HFCC. Her teacher there, also a Fordson counselor and brother to manufacturing teacher Guy Pizzino, suggested she help with FEAR.

She runs design software and related machinery that cut fleur de lis patterns into some of the exposed steel pieces.

“It’s rather a simple software once you get the hang of it,” she said, as she showed off one piece on the back of the car. “It’s my first year, and apparently I’m an expert at it.” Alakashi has graduated, and will attend Wayne State hoping to find a hands-on career.

That does not mean she’s done with the hot rod.

“I do plan to come back in the fall and work on it,” Alakashi said.

Pizzino said he has reserved the Byrant Football field for the Telegraph Cruise on July 23, hoping to show off FEAR. He has invited other staff in the district with classic cars to also gather at the field.

For now, he is still working to get donations for the car.

Ford Racing is considering donating an engine and a transmission, he said.

Meanwhile, another Fordson student created a website at [www.fearroadster.com](http://www.fearroadster.com) to tout the project.

An advantage of kit cars for schools is that other students can be drawn into the project, Kuhr said. Website design, business classes and others can be involved.

Students end up with a valuable property that can be sold to pay for the next project.

“It will be a real marketable car,” Kuhr said. His company does kit cars and prebuilt cars for clients across the country.

Student Ali Alzayadi is enjoying the project.

“It gives us a chance to do hands on learning,” Alzayadi said.

“You can understand it a lot better if you can take it apart.” The senior only wished Fordson had such a project when he started there.

“It’s like watching a baby grow. We are putting life together,” Alzayadi said.

***Katie Hetrick covers Dearborn Public Schools. She can be reached at [katie\\_hetrick@hotmail.com](mailto:katie_hetrick@hotmail.com).***