

Clarenceville launches search for new chief

By Diane Gale
staff writer

A car built by Farmington High School students could very well have you thinking it was coming when, in reality, it was going.

Auto mechanics teacher Tom Allen came up with, as one of his students calls it, "another one of his fantasy ideas."

He decided to take an advanced class

of six seniors and allow them to weld the front end of a 1982 Pontiac Phoenix to the front end of a 1982 Ford Escort.

Besides being unusual, the stametype auto also is useful as a teaching aid, said Allen. "At first I was apprehensive, because I didn't think it would work," said Ray Hill, one of the six student mechanics who worked on the project.

"I THOUGHT IT was a bunch of

bull, and that we were guinea pigs for another one of his fantasy ideas," Hill said. "But, I've never seen any other school have anything like this."

The six students involved in the Vocational III, Independent study course, are seniors who have taken auto mechanics courses for three years.

"It's not every day that you put two ends of a car together and make it run," said student Carl Buck.

The Phoenix is white and has an automatic transmission. The Escort is yellow and runs with a manual gear shift. Put them together, and you have one car with two engines, two steering wheels and two front ends.

Allen plans to leave each car with its own color.

An effort in trying to move the car was interesting. The Phoenix engine wouldn't turn over, so Allen jumped into the back seat — or rather the front

seat of the Escort — and moved the car to the designated spot.

"I WISH I could have done something like this when I was in high school," Allen said.

It took the students three months to put the cars together.

The young mechanics joke that if it weren't for an October 1981 storm, they never would have had the opportunity to build the one-of-a-kind auto. The Phoenix was completely submerged in

water during the storm, which flooded the Grand River-Halsted area of town, including an auto dealership. The school district came out the better for it with the acquisition of the Pontiac Phoenix.

The Escort was cut in half for automotive testing. Both cars were donated by local dealers.

THE PHOENIX CAME to the school as a complete car. So students cut it in two with welding torches and took out

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