

Here today, global tomorrow

120 students to display projects that help Earth

BY LOLA ALAPO
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Cody Wright and his classmates want to help you reduce your water bill.

The South-Doyle Middle School seventh-graders added the finishing touches to a miniature wooden garage — complete with drinking straws that serve as gutters — earlier this week.

The straws lead to tiny blue wooden barrels that would collect and filter rainwater.

Ideally, the water would be used to irrigate the garden or wash laundry.

"We're trying to get people interested in environmental rain barrels so we can save the Earth," said Cody, 13.

The students will present their project to the public Monday at the City County Building downtown. It's one of five models that will be on display. The goal is to educate the community about Earth-friendly alternatives to conventional urban development.

Cody and his cohorts are among 120 South-Doyle seventh-graders building one of five low-impact development models.

They include mini green roofs (vegetated rooftops that are pretty and also reduce storm-water runoff) and

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■ Watch South-Doyle Middle School seventh-graders working on their projects.

grassy swales (grass-lined channels that slow storm-water runoff, trap sediments and treat pollutants).

There's also a rain garden (located in depressions to catch and hold runoff) and semi-pervious paving (alternative surfaces that let water infiltrate into the ground, unlike standard asphalt and concrete).

These projects are a way for the students to make a difference, said Dave Gorman, the science teacher spearheading the projects.

"Sometimes when you're in seventh grade, you feel like the world is a pretty big place and you don't have a lot of impact," he said. "They're learning things that are important and big concepts. But they're also small concepts and are things they can do in their neighborhood and in their own house."

The students in Gorman's five science classes have worked on the projects since January in conjunction with the Knox County Adopt-A-Watershed program.

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The program, which teaches the students about conservation and ecology, is conducted through the Water Quality Forum, a consortium of agencies — including Ijams Nature Center, Knoxville Utilities Board and the University of Tennessee — working to protect the health of the county's waterways.

After the students present their works Monday, there is the possibility of displaying the projects at Ijams, said Ruth Anne Hanahan, the Adopt-A-Watershed coordinator.

Earlier this week, the seventh-graders worked on PowerPoint presentations, pamphlets and posters to comple-

ment the models.

Stephen Blevins, 12, and his group on Thursday were still trying to decide whether to use real sod or artificial turf on their green roof model.

The sod wasn't cooperating, so they opted for turf.

When asked why he would promote the use of a green roof, Stephen said, "It'd look nice. Great insulation."

"It's simple, and it can help a lot," Douglas Potter, 13, added. "In the long run, it'll definitely help."

Some of the students are nervous about the presentation, Gorman said, but the passion they've put into the projects has overshadowed their anxieties.

"One of the things I mentioned to them is that the adults who will be there may not have an open mind, just because it's hard to

change your mind when you're 46 years old like I am," he said. "Maybe having some youthful exuberance may be the kind of thing that makes people say, 'Hey, this is something we can do. This is something that makes sense. And it's not that expensive to do.'"

To pique interest, Gorman and the students on Monday are giving away a blue 55-gallon rain barrel through a raffle. The barrel was donated to the class by Parci Gibson of the Fort Loudoun Lake Association.

Perhaps those who attend the presentation will recognize how much work students have put into the projects, Brandon Cox, 14, said.

"We hope they like it," he said.

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LOW-IMPACT DEVELOPMENT

- **Who:** South-Doyle Middle School seventh-graders
- **What:** Public presentation of models of green roofs, rain gardens, rain barrels, grassy swales and semi-pervious paving as alternatives to conventional urban development.
- **When:** 10 a.m. Monday. Open house at 11 a.m.
- **Where:** Small Assembly Room, City County Building, Knoxville



South-Doyle Middle School students used a variety of items to create displays to present to the public Monday to educate the community about Earth-friendly alternatives that reduce negative environmental impacts in urban areas.