

Teachers study watershed needs

Two local teachers and a volunteer have just completed a four-day training program to allow them to participate in the county's new Adopt-A-Watershed program.

Mike Blankenship, Will Roberts and Melissa Nance attended classes June 23-26 sponsored by the Knox-Area Water Quality Forum (www.waterqualityforum.org)

Blankenship is an agricultural education teacher from Halls High/North Knox Vocational Center; Roberts is a science teacher from Powell Middle; and Nance is a Powell resident and member of the Beaver Creek Watershed Association.

Blankenship said, "Through Adopt-A-Watershed, students become involved in curriculum-based projects that help to improve their local communities. Classes investigate conditions in their watershed, identify issues and problems they can address and then work to solve them."

The newcomers to the program will be joining veteran Adopt-A-Watershed teachers who have already been making their mark in the Beaver Creek Watershed. At Gibbs High, Ashley Whitmire's ecology class evaluates and reports how local land development is impacting Beaver Creek water conditions in the Gibbs community.

On downstream, Kerrie Coley from Halls High has involved her ecology class in multiple assessments of Beaver Creek tributaries in the Halls community including cataloging streamside native plant species and removing exotic pest species.

In Powell, Debbie Arnold's high

school environmental science class last fall partnered with Knox County Parks and Recreation to create a glass mosaic of Beaver Creek and plant daffodils along the newly established greenway through the Powell community. Tom Jursik's Powell Middle Environmental Club joined in the effort to beautify the community by planting more daffodils on the school campus. His club, over the last three years, has been creating a Beaver Creek Watershed educational corner in their school's library including building an impressive three-dimensional watershed model.

With the assistance of the CAC AmeriCorps Water Quality Team, these dynamic teachers structure projects so that their students can obtain knowledge and skills required by their curriculum while also learning the meaning of civic responsibility.

The Adopt-A-Watershed Program, coordinated by the Tennessee Water Resources Research Center at the University of Tennessee on behalf of the Water Quality Forum, is now in its sixth year and is active in 15 middle and high schools across Knox County.

Coley attended a 10-day AAW Southeastern Leadership Institute this past summer and is currently serving as an advisor to the program. Melissa Nance will serve as a liaison between the Beaver Creek Watershed Association and the Beaver Creek Adopt-A-Watershed teachers by helping them to coordinate community-based projects that provide students those learning opportunities that simply can't be found in the classroom, Blankenship said.



Knox County educators who completed the four-day Adopt-A-Stream sessions: Will Roberts, Powell High; Marge Baker, Holston Middle; Dr. Pat Pagni, Knoxville College; Melissa Nance, Beaver Creek Watershed Association; Helen Morrow, Austin-East; Mike Blankenship, Halls High; and Dave Gorman, South-Doyle Middle. Not pictures is Leslie Rines, Fulton.