

## Seymour Middle gets special science program



By David Grimes

Students at Seymour Middle School will enjoy a new sciences program this fall, courtesy of the University of Tennessee and a grant from the National Science Foundation that amounts to nearly \$2 million over the next three years.

Called GK-12, the program allows UT graduate students in the earth sciences to work with Seymour Middle and six other schools in Knox, Sevier, Blount and Jefferson counties.

Dr. Sally Horn, professor of geography who has been at UT since 1987, is helping to administer the program as

a principal investigator with Dr. Lynn Champion and Dr. Ken Orvis.

“Not every scientist has crazy hair and a white lab coat,” Dr. Horn quipped to the Times. “We want to show the students of Seymour that there are a lot more opportunities in science than they might think.”

In part the program is designed to help nurture in young girls a continued interest in science, which according to Horn drops off at the middle-school age.

“We want the students to see that science is connected to the world around them, and that an interest in a scientific career might link directly to,

for example, someone’s love for hiking,” Dr. Horn said of the program.

The curriculum calls for 10 graduate students from UT’s geography and earth and planetary sciences departments, known as GK-12 Fellows, to each spend ten hours per week working with a specific set of teachers and classes in each school, as well as an additional five hours in preparation for the classes.

The plan is for Seymour’s students to experience the science directly, with field work and hands-on samples from the scientific world.

“Middle school students

will investigate, for example, how growth rings in local trees or sediment in ponds can reveal past changes in the environment,” Dr. Horn said.

Each GK-12 Fellow will work closely with his or her faculty adviser to develop activities that link middle school classrooms with UT research. Students in the classes where UT students will be placed, and their parents, will have the opportunity to visit the UT campus and, tour the university’s science facilities. The Fellows will also host “science nights” at the middle schools in which parents, students and community members can participate in science activities developed in the program, according to Dr. Horn.

The Seymour Middle School instructors who will be part of the \$1.97 million program are Marian White and Michele Ballard.

Other area schools in the UT version of the program include Northview Middle School in Sevier County, Halls and Holston Middle Schools in Knox County, Carpenter’s and Heritage Middle Schools in Blount County, and Jefferson Middle School in Jefferson County.