



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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MWRD Procurement and Materials Management Dept. shines

Procurement Manager wins national award thanks to staff nomination



(Front, from L to R): Buyer Scott Kowalski, Procurement Manager Michael Simkhin, Senior Buyer John Kappel. (Back, from L to R): Buyer Kelley Vaughn, Buyer Donna Tyes, Senior Buyer Clement Cherian, Senior Buyer Ethan Sinnema, Buyer David Schmid and Senior Buyer Jonathan Doyle are part of an important team in the MWRD Procurement and Materials Management Department supplying MWRD staff the tools to keep operations humming.

It takes a positive and supportive work environment when procuring materials that allow the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) to protect the region's water environment. Now, it's also award winning.

The National Cooperative Procurement Partners (NCPP) organization has selected MWRD Procurement Manager Michael Simkhin with an annual Above & Beyond award. Simkhin was one of 15 winners selected from across the country to receive the award that recognizes buyers, stock room clerks and managers for going above and beyond in the public procurement process.

"Congratulations to Mike Simkhin and our Procurement and Materials Management team under the leadership of Director Darlene LoCascio for this major honor," said MWRD President Kari K. Steele. "As the sole procurement manager at the MWRD, it is Mike's invaluable leadership that has steered our buyers through COVID-19 while also encouraging them to continue training and development that better prepares our buyers to succeed in meeting the many demands of protecting our water environment."

Often forgotten in the daily role of the MWRD to protect the region's water environment, it is the pivotal work of MWRD's Procurement and Materials Management Department *(continued)*

MWRD Procurement and Materials Management Dept. shines, *cont.*

buyers that supplies MWRD staff with the tools to complete their daily tasks, serving 12.72 million people each day on a yearly budget of \$1.4 billion. They must create a buying strategy, research the proper business products and supplies, see what the market holds and then help write the specifications working with the end users to match the MWRD's needs. They also assess these products with an eye on sustainability and the environment. To provide the equipment that treats and transforms 1.3 billion gallons of wastewater into clean water each day is no small feat.

Senior Buyers John Kappel and Clement Cherian nominated Simkhin for the award, highlighting the encouraging workplace environment that MWRD leadership has instilled in assuring positive work results.

"Mike is business savvy, having an ability to delineate big picture plans to projects and tasks, to complete departmental and agency goals. As Covid shut down the office setting, Mike was an invaluable driving force in moving the Department efficiently to remote work," the application read.

Outside of work, Simkhin has donated his time to support a charity toy drive at La Rabida Children's Hospital. Since 2009, his efforts have provided thousands of toys to countless kids and their families going through the most difficult health circumstances.

Simkhin, who started at the MWRD in 2006 as a buyer before being promoted to Procurement Manager in 2016, credits his staff for embracing that collaborative work environment and the MWRD for encouraging continuing professional training and education opportunities in its Strategic Plan. Among the many professional development opportunities around the office, staff themselves created a Peer Recognition Wall that honors a buyer each quarter for their work and the impact on the MWRD. Each quarter they pass off a trophy of a horse, with the award appropriately entitled "The Workhorse." These newfound traditions have developed a culture of collaboration and positive morale for a fun and thriving workplace. They meet each week to discuss work over coffee and are encouraged to participate in professional development opportunities, especially industry certifications and best practices.

"The National Cooperative Procurement Partners Above and Beyond Award is a testament to a thriving work environment and professional development opportunities in our Procurement and Materials Management Department," said MWRD Chairman of Finance Marcelino Garcia. "Congratulations to Mike Simkhin and our procurement staff on the award and thank you for your tireless work to equip our MWRD staff tasked with performing so many critical jobs that protect our region's quality of life."

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Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

Established in 1889, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) is an award-winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois. Learn more at mwrld.org.