



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

# Press Release

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## Commissioner Spyropoulos honors life-saving act, presents Emmanuel Gonzalez with MWRD resolution



*In the photo: Commissioner Mariyana T. Spyropoulos displays the resolution that she presented to Emmanuel Gonzalez (on the left) during the MWRD Board meeting August 9. Gonzalez is credited for saving the life of court reporter Andrew Pitts (on the right) during a chance encounter on the Chicago River.*

Instead of paddling past an individual floating upside down and unconscious in the Chicago River earlier this summer, 17 year old Emmanuel Gonzalez decided to hold the man's head and mouth above water and wait for rescuers. This act helped save the life of court reporter Andrew Pitts.

For his bravery, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) Commissioner Mariyana T. Spyropoulos presented Gonzalez with a resolution during the MWRD Board meeting this morning.

"We wanted to honor Emmanuel's bravery with this resolution," said Commissioner Spyropoulos. "His quick-thinking actions saved a stranger's life. He is an outstanding young man, he is a credit to humanity, and his family should be very proud of him."

Gonzalez, 17, of Chicago, recently graduated from Kennedy High School and plans to attend the University of Illinois at

Champaign in the fall. Gonzalez and his friend, Stephany Lopez, were kayaking for the first time on June 13 when they spotted Pitts floating face down.

"Emmanuel put his regard for a fellow citizen ahead of his own safety to keep Mr. Pitts alive," Commissioner Spyropoulos said. "Fortunately for Mr. Pitts, Emmanuel learned to kayak at the right time on the right day in the right place."

After he accepted the resolution, Gonzalez said, "I did what I had to do at that time. I knew something had to be done."

Pitts expressed strong sentiments for Gonzalez's actions. "I am extremely grateful for him, and I wouldn't be here except for him," Pitts said. "I'm also grateful for the officers who arrived on scene and for the staff at Northwestern Memorial Hospital. They all saved my life."

Nohemi Pitts, Andrew's wife, also expressed appreciation for Gonzalez's quick actions and credits Gonzalez for bringing her husband and children's father home.

"Andrew is the best husband and father a family could ever have, and I could not imagine life without him," said Nohemi Pitts. "We are all just thrilled this has a happy ending."

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*Our water environment... Take it personally*

*Established in 1889, the MWRD ([www.mwr.org](http://www.mwr.org)) is an award-winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois.*