



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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New rain garden, native plantings to reduce flooding on Haines Elementary School playground

As students played on nearby mounds of topsoil, water professionals from throughout the United States used their brawn and their brains to construct a rain garden at Haines Elementary School, 247 W. 23rd Pl., in Chicago on Oct. 4.

The service project helped kick off the Water Environment Federation's (WEF's) 86th Annual Technical Exhibition and Conference, WEFTEC® 2013, held at McCormick Place. A ribbon-cutting ceremony featuring WEF President Cordell W. Samuels, WEF team lead Tim Moran, school principal Ginger Lumpkin, former teacher and Metropolitan Water Reclamation District Commissioner (MWRD) President Kathy Meany, Chairman of Finance Mariyana Spyropoulos, Commissioners Debra Shore and Kari Steele, and executive director David St. Pierre was held later in the day.

The project consisted of replacing a 1,000 sq. ft. section of pavement with native plantings to help relieve stormwater runoff. In rainy weather, the playground quickly flooded generally due to the city's lack of elevation. Add in the asphalt, which is an impervious pavement, the water had nowhere to go. With the construction of the rain garden, stormwater will be able to collect in the garden instead of pooling on the grounds, which previously rendered playtime nearly impossible in the hours following a storm.

Each year, dozens of WEFTEC® participants arrive to their destinations early to participate in a service project. This year, more than 100 helped, the most since the first rain garden was constructed in 2008. Perhaps coming the farthest was Hana Schoon, Community Relations Executive with Singapore's PUB, the national water agency.

"Singapore water resources are precious because Singapore has densely populated land with limited space to store rainfall and no natural aquifers and lakes. We consistently stress the need to conserve water," Schoon said.

"Capturing rain where it falls and allowing that water to recharge our underground water supply is something we need to be doing throughout the Chicago region," said MWRD Commissioner Debra Shore. "Having water professionals construct a rain garden here shows their commitment to managing water resources wisely and will leave a lasting sign of their good work."



Haines Elementary students, staff and volunteers from throughout the world stand in the rain garden that will prevent flooding on the playground and serve as a lasting reminder of the Water Environment Federation's (WEF's) 86th Annual Technical Exhibition and Conference, WEFTEC® 2013, held at McCormick Place.

*Established in 1889, the MWRD (www.mwr.org) is an award-winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois. **Our water environment, take it personally.***