



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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Conserving water takes priority on the West Side



MWRD Vice President Barbara McGowan (third from left), 29th Alderman Chris Taliaferro (second from right), and Arnold Bearden (kneeling) coordinated a community program to instruct residents on how to install rain barrels. The MWRD has a free program for interested residents.

With record-setting rainfall pummeling the Chicago area this June, West Side residents flocked to a workshop highlighting the use of rain barrels for a new program sponsored by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD).

Neighbors gathered for the workshop at Amundsen Park, 6200 W. Bloomingdale Ave., to learn about installing rain barrels and how using them can lead to water conservation and flood prevention by reducing the amount of runoff into the local sewer systems.

MWRD Vice President Barbara McGowan coordinated the event along with 29th Ward Ald. Chris Taliaferro, allowing dozens of residents to register for free rain barrels.

“Despite the rain we have experienced in June, rain barrel owners still have an opportunity to salvage 55 gallons of water every time it rains. This water can be used to irrigate gardens and help wash and clean tools, work boots and cars,” said Commissioner McGowan. “More importantly, rain barrels serve a larger purpose in reducing the water entering our sewer system and backing up into our homes and streets. One rain barrel might not end flooding, but if half the homes on our city blocks were equipped with rain barrels, we could make a significant dent in the amount of stormwater flooding our communities. It’s this type of green infrastructure we have to consider adding to our homes.”



MWRD Senior Civil Engineer Cedric Robertson (center) instructs 29th ward residents on how to properly install a rain barrel

The newly formed partnership is a result of a new rain barrel distribution program the MWRD established to coordinate with different city wards and suburbs. City ward offices can work with non-governmental organizations and community groups like the 29th Ward’s Community Environmental Network to enroll in the program. The MWRD also works with campus-type facilities, such as churches, schools and community centers. The MWRD recently amended existing inter-governmental agreements (IGAs) with local municipalities and began signing new IGAs with other communities to help distribute the free rain barrels. In addition, the MWRD is forging Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreements with non-government organizations.

Residents living in the 29th Ward can access the MWRD’s rain barrel program through the Community Environmental Network and Alderman Taliaferro’s office by calling (773) 237-6460. After placing orders, the barrels will be delivered to the homeowners in about a month. There is a limit of four per resident.

Rain barrels are a valuable form of green infrastructure because the 55-gallon barrels are designed to capture and reuse rain water that is bound for the sewer system. By disconnecting the downspouts that normally transfer roof runoff to the sewer system, the rain barrels can now reduce basement backups and reduce the combined sewer overflow volume, overland flooding and infiltration and inflow. For more information about the rain barrel program, visit www.mwr.org.

Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

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.