



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

# Press Release

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## MWRD staff tutor CPS students in WITS program

They board a bus and do without lunch, heading to a nearby school to help children boost their love of learning and increase their chances for successful lives. They're the MWRD volunteers who participate in Working in the Schools (WITS), a non-profit organization promoting literacy by providing one-on-one tutoring and mentoring. The program has played a feature role at elementary and middle schools close to MWRD's downtown offices, making a world of difference in the lives of second, third and fourth graders for an hour each week.

The volunteer program at MWRD has been part of WITS for nearly 13 years. The non-profit was co-founded 20 years

ago by former MWRD Commissioner Joanne Alter and still receives support from the Board of Commissioners.

"The WITS program complements our mission here at the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago," said Board of Commissioners President Mariyana Spyropoulos. "We believe very strongly in the importance of education. Our staff members experience this value every week when they participate in Working in the Schools as they mentor students and witness their improvement throughout the school year."

This year's program is set to begin in early October. The WITS bus picks up volunteers at the MWRD's main



*Ouidie Pollard, Administrative Specialist*

office complex on Wednesdays, takes them to Manierre Middle School at 1420 North Hudson, and returns them to the office by 12:45 p.m. Two employees are assigned to one student; the staff member rotates every other week. With this method developed by WITS, students benefit from working with the same mentors, gaining the consistency necessary for students to progress. Mentor relationships also empower the students and enrich the lives of both students and volunteers. The power of the exchange between students and mentors means students gain tools needed to excel in academics and in life.

### Why do staff members volunteer for WITS?

“I like sharing my love of reading with a child, so that youngster will learn to enjoy reading too.”

*Mary Carroll – Community Education Specialist*

“Having been blessed with many great mentors in my life, I enjoy paying it forward to the next generation of kids through WITS.”

*Terence Maiellaro – Associate Mechanical Engineer*

“WITS is a great way to give back to the community.”

*Adele Demooy – Human Resources Manager*

“It’s rewarding to have an opportunity to impact a child by reading to them.”

*Gayle Turek – Management Analyst II*

“I transferred to the Stickney Plant and one of the things I miss most about working downtown is being part of the Reading Program! It’s worth all the inconvenience to see all the kids faces light up when we walk into the classroom, and the kids whose faces don’t light up need us even more! I like getting a challenging student because I know if someone has just one person who values them, it can change his or her life!”

*Annette Bartl – Budget & Management Analyst*

“WITS helps me share my love of reading with the future generation.”

*Massimiliano Guglielmo – Associate Architect*

“I like being part of an experience where a kid learns to read or read better. Who knows? It might actually make a difference in his or her life.”

*Chris Murray – Senior Attorney*

“The best thank you I receive is seeing the smile on the children’s faces when they come into the classroom to read with us.”

*Christopher Haite – P.E. Managing Civil Engineer*

“It’s a great program and a ton of fun.”

*Barbara Miller – Senior Human Resources Analyst*

“It’s fun to get to know a student over my lunch break, and it’s very rewarding to watch that student become a more confident reader over the school year.”

*Anne Wright – Assistant Public Affairs Specialist*

Joining more than 1,800 volunteers involved in one-on-one mentoring gives the staff at MWRD a unique opportunity to help children grow their love of reading and improve their performance at school.

More information about the WITS program can be found at [www.witschicago.org](http://www.witschicago.org).



*Derrick Coleman, Motor Vehicle Dispatcher Supervisor*



*Cordelia Henry, Human Resources Analyst*

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## Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

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.