



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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MWRD recognizes Women's History Month by honoring three staff members; keynote address by Elizabeth Brackett delivers insight



(L-R): MWRD Commissioner Kari K. Steele, President Mariyana Spyropoulos, WTTW correspondent Elizabeth Brackett and Commissioner Josina Morita.



MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos, Commissioner Josina Morita, supervising environmental specialist Sharie Sopcak-Phelan, environmental chemist Tiffany Poole, engineering technician 3 Camille Valdes and Commissioner Kari K. Steele pause for photos after the MWRD's Women's History Month event.

In 1911, the United States officially honored International Women's Day and 76 years later, Congress declared Women's History Month in 1987. The MWRD Board of Commissioners sponsored a resolution honoring Women's History Month on Thursday, March 16 and honored three District staff and welcomed keynote remarks later in the day by WTTW-TV Correspondent Elizabeth Brackett.

President Mariyana Spyropoulos acknowledged over 500 women employed by the District in these various areas: officials, managers, professionals, technicians, protective services, administrative support, skilled crafts and service and maintenance.

Brackett shared that she successfully ran the election campaign for MWRD Commissioner Joanne Alter in the 1970s. Not only was Alter the first female elected to the MWRD Board of Commissioners, she was also the first "green" Commissioner to be elected to the Board.

Brackett said she still is focused on environmental issues today as a WTTW correspondent, and it has been her mission to examine issues that shed light on water quality. Her work has documented how our water environ-

ment impacts both drinking water and wastewater and how that water quality impacts our health and economy. Brackett expressed her delight in seeing the transformation of the quality of the Chicago River, beginning with Commissioner Alter's efforts in picking up trash out of the river and fast forward 40 years and there is discussion underway about holding a swim competition in the same Chicago River.

Three MWRD employees received awards for contributions in their respective fields: supervising environmental specialist Sharie Sopcak-Phelan, environmental chemist Tiffany Poole and engineering technician III Camille Valdes.

Commissioner Kari Steele introduced Phelan and expressed her personal gratitude to Phelan as her first boss who inspired Kari to become a chemist. Sharie related how she started her career as a pollution control officer, received several promotions over the years, and now has achieved her position as a supervising environmental specialist. *(continued)*

MWRD recognizes Women's History Month *(continued)*

Tiffany Poole analyzes aqueous, sediment and soil samples daily and said her first assignment focused solely on bottles. She recognized that in order to get ahead and escape the bottle room, she would have to exceed expectations, which she did and resulted in her career progression. Poole gave the group very specific advice: "You are your own best advocate, so never go unnoticed because greatness is not silent!"

Commissioner Josina Morita introduced Valdes, who discussed her journey to becoming an engineering techni-

cian. As part of her duties Valdes reports TARP levels and calculates pumped volume for Mainstream Pumping Station and the Racine Avenue Pumping Station. She also leads tours of the Stickney Water Reclamation Plant.

"Women's History Month is honored worldwide as a celebration of the contributions of women in history and it is fitting that we honor this occasion with a tribute to the hardworking women throughout the District," said President Spyropoulos.

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Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

Established in 1889, the MWRD (www.mwrdd.org) is an award-winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois.