



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

# Press Release

Allison Fore

Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer

312.751.6626

allison.fore@mwrdr.org

100 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611

For immediate release

October 26, 2017

## International water experts, MWRD, DWM transform local schoolyard

More than 220 volunteers and water professionals from around the world joined the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) to beautify a local school campus and prepare it to take on stormwater.

The 10th Annual Water Environment Federation (WEF) Community Garden Service Project was held at Manierre Elementary School, 1420 N. Hudson Ave., Chicago. In transforming the grounds at Manierre School, the day of planting educates the school community about water, the environment and the power of green infrastructure. The project was held in conjunction with the Water Environment Federation Technical Exhibition and Conference (WEFTEC), which brought more than 20,000 people to McCormick Place recently to discuss cutting-edge technologies and services in the water industry.

“We are happy to convert this asphalt lot into a more inviting space that promotes improved stormwater management, captures rain where it falls and allows that water to recharge our underground water supply,” said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. “We thank our partners at WEF, the Chicago Department of Water Management, the Chicago Public Schools and Manierre Elementary School for taking the lead on educating future generations about the importance of addressing stormwater and impervious surfaces. Chicago is flat and has little room for today’s heavy rainfall. By coming together to install green infrastructure like this rain garden, we can work toward solutions.”

Participants included members of the WEF Student and Young Professionals Committee, volunteers from the WEF House of Delegates and Board of Trustees, the MWRD and Chicago Department of Water Management (DWM).

“The Chicago Department of Water Management supplies clean water to over 40 percent of Illinois’ population every day,” said Chicago Department of Water Manage-



*Officials celebrated the completion of the community garden at Manierre Elementary School. (From L to R): Ald. Water Burnett Jr. (27th), WEF Service Project Vice Chair Natalie Cook, Chicago Department of Water Management Commissioner Randy Conner, MWRD Commissioner Josina Morita, Manierre Elementary School Acting Principal Tinishi P. Davis, WEF Service Project Chair Anthony Giovannone, MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos and Water Environment Federation President Rick Warner.*

ment Commissioner Randy Conner. “That is why we were particularly happy to participate in this wonderful project to help kids understand the importance of water conservation.”

Volunteers spent the day constructing a bioswale with native plants and an outdoor classroom area with permeable pavers and a retention area underneath it. The native garden will retain water and become a meeting place for students and teachers.

“It is fun to see so many water professionals put their passions to work at a schoolyard like Manierre,” said MWRD Commissioner Josina Morita. “As we have witnessed from recent rainstorms, there are few places for stormwater runoff to travel. The new rain garden will address urban flooding, capture stormwater pollution and provide students a learning environment where they can avoid puddles and think about protecting their water environment.” *(continued)*

## International water experts, MWRD, DWM transform local schoolyard (continued)



*Water professionals volunteered to create a rain garden and sustainable schoolyard at Manierre Elementary School in the Old Town neighborhood. Native plants are more durable and have deeper roots than most to help the stormwater infiltrate in the planting areas. They also installed permeable pavers that can better hold water until that water can slowly infiltrate into the soil.*

The WEF committee is already planning for the next service project when WEFTEC reconvenes next year in New Orleans. Each year, several project proposals are considered in the conference's host city. Manierre Elementary proved to be the most deserving site, volunteers said, because the school demonstrated staff commitment and engagement, and a need to address water-related issues.

A day prior, project volunteers, the MWRD, DWM and other partners held the annual WaterPalooza event at the school, providing students with hands-on activities, educating them on the value of water and protecting the local water environment. Activities included water quality testing and learning what can and cannot be flushed down toilets. The service project reinforces many of the concepts shared at WaterPalooza.



*Volunteers with the Water Environment Federation and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago and Chicago Department of Water Management created a community rain garden out of an asphalt lot at Manierre Elementary School to improve stormwater retention and teach students a valuable lesson in water.*

“The success of these projects relies on the passion of our volunteers and the commitment of our local partners like MWRD and the Chicago Department of Water,” said Anthony D. Giovannone, 2017 WEF Service Project Chair. “The goal of the WEF service project is to solve a water related problem that impacts the local community, but perhaps more importantly, we strive to inspire the next generation of water quality professionals.”

To see time-lapse video of the project, visit the MWRD's YouTube page at [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) and search “MWRD” or click on: <https://youtu.be/P3Gdmh2UBtw> and <https://youtu.be/-FXfKifKbOg>.

To see WEF's video on the service project at Manierre School, visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4XFYfgWKPg>

###

### Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

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