



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District *of* Greater Chicago

Press Release

Allison Fore

Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer

312.751.6633

public.affairs@mwrdd.org

100 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611

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Collaboration for green schools earns Space to Grow national award

Chicago Public Schools, City of Chicago, Healthy Schools, MWRD, Openlands partnership earns honors

An innovative public-private partnership involving the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) that is transforming Chicago schoolyards into vibrant green spaces has been named one of 11 award winners representing the best environmental efforts in schools across the country.

Space to Grow, which strives to deliver green spaces on Chicago school grounds, received the 2016 Best of Green School Award for Collaboration by the Center for Green Schools at the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) in collaboration with the Green Schools National Network (GSNN). Space to Grow partners were in attendance to receive the award at the Green Schools Conference and Expo in Pittsburgh, PA on March 31.

Space to Grow provides students and their communities with opportunities for physical activity, outdoor learning, environmental literacy and engagement with art, while addressing neighborhood flooding issues. The program connects families and communities with their local schools by engaging community members in the schoolyard design process and by providing much needed green space in urban neighborhoods. Space to Grow is managed by the Healthy Schools Campaign and Openlands organizations and made possible through the financial and technical support of the Chicago Public Schools, Chicago Department of Water Management and the MWRD.

“Collaboration has been key to the success of Space to Grow,” said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. “Not only are organizations like the MWRD, the Chicago Department of Water Management, Chicago Public Schools, the Healthy Schools Campaign and Openlands partnering to better ensure the right resources are invested in these projects, but the schools and communities are collaborating themselves to educate residents and create more informed neighborhoods about the goals of stormwater management.”

The 2016 Best of Green School award recipients recognized 11 individuals, institutions, projects and events representing the best environmental efforts in schools across the country



In the photo: Space to Grow Project Manager Meg Kelly and Space to Grow School Planning Coordinator Breana Winters, of Openlands, pose in front of the Pittsburgh skyline with the 2016 Best of Green School Award for Collaboration

and highlight the national leaders and innovators in school sustainability for the year.

“This year’s honorees are making huge strides in their schools and communities,” said Rachel Gutter, director of the Center for Green Schools at USGBC. “Each recipient is an inspiring example of innovation and passion in pursuit of schools that educate a generation of sustainability natives, students prepared to take the lead in the 21st century. Becoming a green school is a journey, not a destination; through their work, the leaders behind this inspiring work are blazing new trails in this movement to transform all schools into healthy, safe and inspired places for learning.”

Besides the collaboration category, Green School award winners and their respective categories included:

- **INDIVIDUAL K-12 SCHOOL**
Environmental Charter Schools (Los Angeles, CA)
- **SCHOOL SYSTEM**
Fayette County Public Schools (Lexington, KY)
- **HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION**
Wings of Hope Environmental Education Program at Florida Gulf Coast University (Fort Myers, FL)
- **POLICY MAKER**
Representative Chris Lee (House District 51, Hawaii.)
- **TRANSFORMATION**
USGBC Louisiana Green Schools Initiative (Baton Rouge, LA)
- **STUDENT LEADERSHIP**
Hammond Junior High Magnet School (Hammond, LA)
- **MOMENT FOR MOVEMENT (tie)**
Green Schools Alliance District Collaborative (Washington, D.C.)
and
Research Summit on Childhood Health and School Buildings (Washington, D.C.)

▪ **AMBASSADOR**

Deborah Moore, Green Schools Initiative (Berkeley, CA)

▪ **BUSINESS LEADERSHIP**

Pauline Souza, WRNS Studio Partner and Director of Sustainability (San Francisco, CA)

“The Best of Green Schools honorees play an essential role in propelling the green schools movement forward and setting excellent examples of how to create healthy and sustainable schools,” said Jennifer Seydel, Ph.D., executive director of GSNN. “As our movement advances, having such exemplary mentors across the country will help us improve our work and drive our mission.”

This year’s Green Apple Day of Service will take place on Saturday, Sept. 24, 2016. The annual Green Apple Day of Service brings together thousands of students, teachers, parents and community leaders from around the globe to improve our school environments through service projects, education, community events and more.

The Space to Grow partnership has received many awards, including the USGBC Illinois Chapter Mission Award, the National Physical Activity Plan Champions Award and the Illinois Association of Floodplain and Stormwater Management’s Sustainability Award. The six Space to Grow schoolyards completed between 2014 and 2015 can capture 1,095,508 gallons of water per rain event. Plans are underway to complete four schools in 2016 and five more in 2017.

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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.