



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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Commissioner Avila, MWRD staff judge Future City Competition

To cultivate and encourage sixth, seventh and eighth grade minds to consider future careers in engineering and science, the national Future City competition is held as part of Engineering Week activities.

Chicago regional competition took place at the University of Illinois at Chicago on January 26, and nine Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) staff engineers, including Commissioner Frank Avila, Chairman of the MWRD's Engineering Committee, served as judges or volunteered in some other capacity.

Commissioner Avila was joined by Director of Maintenance and Operations Manju Sharma, Fay Costa, Charlie Jackson, Lynn Kohlhaas, Terence Maiellaro, and Jeff Weber. Aruch Poonspapaya helped plan the competition, and Mike Tom volunteered as a mentor for Immaculate Conception School. Working as a team with a teacher and engineer mentor to plan a city using SimCity software, students researched and wrote a maximum 1,000 word essay to solve an engineering problem within their city, constructed tabletop scale models with recycled materials for a portion of their city, and made a presentation about their projects to a panel of judges.



MWRD Commissioner Avila (at far right) is pictured with the St. Paul of the Cross team and their 1st place award-winning project "Futura Paradisus."

"The Future Cities competition offers a project-based learning experience where students imagine, design, and build cities of the future," said Commissioner Avila. "It's great to see so many young people taking an interest in envisioning what the future might look like."

This year's theme was "Rethink Runoff: Design clean solutions to manage stormwater pollution." Student projects and essays focused on designs for managing stormwater runoff in their future cities. This is the 20th year of the competition, and the Chicago Region is the only region that has participated since the beginning.

"I think Future City is a great activity for students as it provides an understanding as to how engineers impact the world," said facilitator Robert B. Johnson of Rubinos & Mesia Engineers, Inc. "It provides them with practical applications to their science education. I think the student walks away with a better appreciation as to the role of engineers in creating our modern society."

Overall, approximately 100 volunteer judges from the area's engineering community volunteered to help judge and score the SimCity computer models, essays, physical models, presentations, and special awards for all the competing teams. This year's Chicago region winner was St. Paul of the Cross from Park Ridge with their city of Futura Paradisus. The students won a trip to Washington, D.C. to represent the Chicago region in the National Future City Competition later this month. They will compete against more than 35 other schools from around the country.

Organizers are already looking for teams, schools and volunteers for the 2014 competition. Registration begins in August. To learn more, visit <http://futurecity.org/illinois-chicago>. Additional information about the MWRD can be found at www.mwr.org.

*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. **Our water environment, Take it personally.***