



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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Juarez Community Academy seniors learn about sustainability, public service careers during College Week

In 2012, the two-mile stretch of Blue Island Ave. and Cermak Rd. on which Benito Juarez Community Academy is located was designated as the “Greenest Street in America,” the first roadway project in the country to incorporate a wide spectrum of sustainable performance. In the year since its street received that distinction, the school has been planning to implement sustainability efforts of its own. Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) Chairman of Finance Mariyana Spyropoulos recently visited students to discuss these plans in addition to educational and career opportunities as part of the school’s College Week.



Before presenting a rain barrel to Benito Juarez Community Academy Principal Juan Carlos Ocon (on the left) and Math Department Chair Hadeel Shabib (on the right), MWRD Commissioner Mariyana Spyropoulos explained to students why water is a valuable resource and how rain barrels are useful in minimizing water that flows to the sewer system.

Principal Juan Carlos Ocon shared his school’s plans for a green roof and solar panels which are designed to reduce the school’s energy use and expenditures for electricity. Commissioner Mariyana Spyropoulos pointed out how efforts underway at the MWRD are similarly designed to reduce operating costs. She also spoke about the value of water and how civil engineers working for the MWRD, a unit of government, were able to reverse the Chicago River away from Lake Michigan by constructing the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal in 1900.

“As students consider their career options, it is important that they understand the different levels of government and the specific responsibilities of those levels,” said Commissioner Spyropoulos, who has a law degree and Masters in Business Administration. “As far as public service career options go, there are a wide range of opportunities, and the best thing students can do is to take advantage of all available resources and learn from professionals in the field.”

Comm. Spyropoulos recalled the early beginnings of her career path. “When I was in high school, my friends and I weren’t quite sure what we wanted to do or how to get there,” she said. “Whenever a guest speaker came to our class, it really helped us have a better understanding of the ‘real world’. I was honored to be invited to speak. I was happy to see many of them form a greater respect for government, and it may have even sparked an interest in public service.”

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Our water environment, take it personally.

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.