



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

Allison Fore

Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer

312.751.6626

allison.fore@mwr.org

100 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611

For immediate release

February 10, 2016

Water supplied by MWRD volunteers aids Great Lakes neighbors in Flint



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago commissioners and staff packed aboard a bus at 5 a.m. along with thousands of water bottles and made the 5-hour trip to Flint, Michigan, where they were received by Cathy Blankenship, of the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan.

With protecting and improving local water quality at the epicenter of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago's (MWRD's) daily mission, it came as startling news to hear about the crisis of contaminated water in Flint, Michigan. Rather than ignore the issue, MWRD commissioners and staff felt beholden to act.

In a little over a week, MWRD employees worked with the MWRD Credit Union to raise more than \$6,500. They used the money to donate and personally deliver nearly 37,000 bottles of water and presented a check of \$3,000 to the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan in Flint.

"We are happy to lend a hand during times of need," said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. "As one of the largest water resource agencies in the Midwest, commissioners and staff at the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago felt that it was our responsibility to assist our Great Lakes neighbors in Flint."

President Spyropoulos, Vice President Barbara McGowan and Commissioner Kari Steele and 16 MWRD staff, friends and family delivered the water bottles to the Food Bank and also joined the U.S. National Guard and American Red Cross in distributing cases of water to residents in need at a local fire station.



MWRD employees Adam Batinic (left) and Lawrence Taylor load a van with a few cases of water. The operation was fairly smooth with vehicles pulling into local fire stations and receiving water by car. The MWRD was able to offer additional water to many Flint families in dire need as they deal with an ongoing water infrastructure crisis.

"It was not a matter of why or how we become involved. It was essential that we simply help. This is our cause, and the city of Flint should know they are not alone," said Vice President McGowan. "Given our background and working experience in knowing the value of clean water in our daily lives, we couldn't be more proud to show our support.

In about a month's time, the National Guard was working to distribute about 3 million pounds of water, while since Jan. 7 the Food Bank had received 2,948,000 bottles of donated water. But without any timetable to address the lead in the local water supply, the need for water is indefinite. Most of the supply of water received at the Food Bank goes back out the door fairly quickly to 125 local sites for distribution within a week.

"In light of the ongoing water infrastructure crisis plaguing the residents of Flint, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District felt compelled to come to their aid," said Commissioner Steele. "Water is a critical resource that too often has its value forgotten until it is gone. The situation in Flint reminds us that we not take our water for granted and make sure no community is left behind in receiving clean water."

After making the check presentation and delivering water to the Food Bank, MWRD staff and commissioners created an

(continued)



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

Allison Fore

Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer

312.751.6632

allison.fore@mwrdd.org

100 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611

For immediate release

February 10, 2016

Flint water delivery *(continued)*

assembly line to pack another pallet of water bottles destined for the U.S. National Guard and American Red Cross distribution center. The operation run by the National Guard was fairly seamless. Individuals and families in vehicles pulled up and were given a case of water and kept moving. The steady stream of cars passed by and thanked MWRD volunteers for their contributions.

“We are just trying to do our best to adapt to what the city needs,” said Cathy Blankenship, director of development at the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan. “The long-term solution isn’t just water. It’s really getting kids back to a healthy level so they have the ability to fight off diseases and other problems that are going to come along. Their bodies are not in a position to handle the stress.”

To contribute or make a donation of more than 100 cases of water, contact the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan, by visiting www.fbem.org or calling (810) 239-4441. For smaller donations, contact Catholic Charities at (810) 232-9950 or visit www.cityofflint.com.



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago commissioners and staff kept the water moving as it was packed and distributed to residents in need in Flint, Michigan, where lead exposure to drinking water has led to a crisis plaguing the community.

###

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.