



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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Street dedicated to MWRD partner and neighbor Hazel Johnson

City officials, neighbors, friends, family and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) staff joined the People for Community Recovery (PCR) to salute an environmental justice leader who brought reform to her Altgeld Gardens community.

A portion of 130th Street near Ellis Avenue was renamed Hazel Johnson EJ Way in honor of the PCR founder who stood for peace and health for the environment and humankind. The street is directly across from the MWRD's Calumet Water Reclamation Plant (WRP), where the MWRD works to promote the health and environment surrounding the Altgeld Gardens community on the Far South Side.

"Working with the Altgeld Gardens community residents and the People for Community Recovery, we have been able to work together for the betterment of our community," said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. "It is a pleasure to work with Cheryl Johnson and a community committed to people. As we pass by this street we will be reminded of the legacy of Hazel Johnson and the importance of her work to improve our environment and ensure that we work together for all people."

Known as the "mother of the environmental justice movement," Hazel Johnson died in 2011 at the age of 75. She began her activism in 1969 after her husband died of lung cancer, and she began documenting illness and physical ailments that were linked to industrial pollution in the area. She went on to start the PCR in 1979 to address urban environmental pollution. This role led to encounters with community organizer and future President Barack Obama and also presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, who signed an executive order at her behest to direct federal agencies to consider environmental impacts on minorities. Today, the organization, led by her daughter, Executive Director Cheryl Johnson, continues to address pollution as well as housing rights, youth issues and employment services.

In fulfilling the legacy of Hazel Johnson, the MWRD works to protect the local water environment and conditions for residents of Altgeld Gardens and other South Side communities. The MWRD has been in contact with the PCR to better understand any impact the plant has on the community regarding odors. While many of

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MWRD Managing Civil Engineer Jonathan Grabowy (left) and Associate Mechanical Engineer Jonathan Villegas (right) joined People for Community Recovery Executive Director Cheryl Johnson to commemorate the street named after her mother Hazel Johnson. The sign is posted across the street from the Calumet Water Reclamation Plant.

Street dedicated to MWRD partner and neighbor Hazel Johnson *(continued)*



Johnson family members and staff and supporters of the People for Community Recovery celebrate a new street sign near the corner of 130th Street and Ellis Avenue.

these environmental concerns stem from other sources in the area, the MWRD has worked to implement various improvements to monitor and mitigate odors since the MWRD began carrying out an odor monitoring program at its facilities in 1992.

“We want to ensure Calumet is an efficient and dynamic water reclamation plant and also a reliable neighbor that serves our environment,” said MWRD Vice President Barbara McGowan. “Hazel Johnson taught us the value of protecting our environment, and today we pledge to honor that commitment.”

In addition, the MWRD recently introduced a new disinfection process at the Calumet WRP that adds another layer of treatment through a chlorination/dechlorination process that neutralizes or kills bacteria and microorganisms in treated water.

In operation since 1922, the Calumet WRP serves residents and businesses in Chicago and 48 neighboring suburban communities in the southern portion of Cook County. Calumet WRP’s service population is more than 1 million people, covering an area of about 300 square miles.

According to the Chicago Housing Authority’s website, Altgeld Gardens was built in 1945 and named in honor of Illinois politician John Peter Altgeld, while the adjoining Philip Murray Homes were built in 1954 and named in honor of Philip Murray, a visionary leader of the labor movement.

To report air or water pollution, the public is urged to call (800)-322-DUMP or visit www.mwr.org and click on the “Report Air or Water Pollution” at right under “Report.” Users of Apple iOS devices can also download the MWRD’s CIR (Citizen Incident Reporting) app, which allows users to submit instances of odors and other environmental-related issues.



The sprawling Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago’s Calumet Water Reclamation Plant, 400 E. 130th St., treats on average 354 million gallons of water per day to serve Chicago and 48 south suburbs.

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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.