



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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Arbor Day celebration with the MWRD, CPS, 44th Ward and Dept. of Streets and Sanitation points to the benefits of trees



Lakeview High School Principal Paul Karafiol (left), Lakeview students and MWRD Commissioner Kari K. Steele (second from right) and 44th Ward Ald. Tom Tunney (right) help mulch a new parkway tree in front of the school along Asbland Avenue.



MWRD Commissioner Kari Steele addresses hundreds of Lakeview High School students on the importance of trees and how green infrastructure helps the MWRD in its efforts to mitigate flooding.

Lakeview High School on the North Side is the oldest operating high school in the state of Illinois, dating back to 1874 and its current location in 1886, and it is the hope of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) that new saplings that the MWRD provided will be standing for just as long a time.

To kick off Arbor Day celebrations across Cook County, MWRD Commissioner Kari K. Steele joined the Chicago Department of Streets and Sanitation (DSS), 44th Ward Ald. Tom Tunney, and Lakeview faculty and students to plant new trees and hand out 450 saplings as part of the MWRD's Restore the Canopy program.

"You might ask what the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District would have to do with trees?" "Well if you've ever experienced a flooded basement or flooded street, I can help you understand the value of trees.

A tree canopy can provide more than shade and can do more than reduce air pollution by absorbing carbon dioxide. Trees are a form of green infrastructure that can reduce and soak up stormwater by intercepting precipitation in leaves and branches to keep that water out of our basements, sewers and streets," said Commissioner Steele.

Commissioner Steele, 44th Ward Ald. Tom Tunney, DSS Commissioner Charles L. Williams, Deputy Commissioner Malcolm Whiteside Jr., Senior City Forester Peter Czubak gathered in front of Lakeview High School with Principal Paul Karafiol to speak to students about the many benefits of trees, while encouraging students to take a sapling home and plant it in their backyards. DSS Bureau of Forestry and the Chicago Department of Transportation also planted seven new trees, consisting of Princeton American elm trees and Kentucky coffeetrees. *(continued)*

Arbor Day celebration with the MWRD, CPS, 44th Ward and Dept. of Streets and Sanitation *(continued)*

“Trees not only increase the beauty of our city, but they also increase the property values of our homes and businesses and make the air safer to breathe as they absorb carbon dioxide and generate oxygen” said Charles L. Williams. “By expanding our tree canopy, we are adding to the health and prosperity of our city and its residents.”

DSS, which has 56 certified Arborists in its Forestry Bureau, plans to plant over 2,500 trees in neighborhoods across Chicago this year, in addition to treating approximately 25,000 ash trees to continue protecting against the Emerald Ash Borer beetle. DSS manages 560,000 trees in the public way, and the City’s street trees alone clean over 142 tons of air pollution each year, storing over 115,000 tons of carbon dioxide. Forestry crews trim over 50,000 trees each year to maintain their health and appearance.

Ald. Tunney said he wants to see more tree-lined arterial streets because trees makes a substantial difference in the quality of streetscapes in his community.

“Trees are not only good for the environment for reclaiming water and preventing basement flooding, but they certainly enhance the streetscape and improve property values,” said 44th Ward Ald. Tom Tunney, who credited his neighboring 47th Ward Ald. Ameya Pawar for making tree-lined streets a priority. “When I became alderman, I made it a goal to plant as many trees along the arterial streets as possible, because there is evidence that tree-lined streets add to retail sales. We are not replacing the trees at the rate we are losing them, and providing a canopy brings in many benefits. I wish we had more Arbor Days.”

The MWRD has distributed nearly 30,000 free tree saplings in a year, including 7,900 free tree saplings



The MWRD distributed 450 free oak tree saplings to students and faculty at Lakeview High School. The saplings, at only 18 inches may not look too big now, but have the potential to tower over these same students one day.

already in 2017. The MWRD has partnered with dozens of schools, community groups, municipalities and city wards.

“We are excited about the rapid growth of our program and the interest from thousands of residents across Cook County,” said MWRD President MWRD Mariyana Spyropoulos. “We urge everyone to consider planting a tree this Arbor Day and help us restore our canopy and improve our water environment.”

Participants in the MWRD Restore the Canopy program are encouraged to help track the growth of their trees and the emerging canopy in their communities on the MWRD website at www.mwrdd.org, where the MWRD maps the distribution of trees.

The MWRD also planned to give away trees at nearly a dozen events over the Arbor Day weekend.

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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.