



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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MWRD honors golden anniversary of Special Olympics

Ceremony kicks off events at Soldier Field July 17-July 21 and Chicago Ducky Derby on August 9



Front Row (L-R) MWRD Commissioner Frank Avila, Commissioner Ken Dunkin, Vidal Vasquez, MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos, award-winning Special Olympian Lucas Vasquez, Illinois Supreme Court Justice Anne Burke, Vice President Barbara McGowan, and Commissioners Debra Shore, David J. Walsh, Kari K. Steele and Josina Morita. Back Row (L-R): Commissioner Martin J. Durkan and Special Olympics Chicago President Kevin Magnuson.

For more than 20 years, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) has partnered with Special Olympics Illinois to assist with the organization's annual Chicago Ducky Derby which raises funds and awareness for the work of the Special Olympics in Illinois. But the Special Olympics organization has a much longer history. To celebrate the Special Olympics' 50th anniversary, the MWRD Board of Commissioners presented a resolution to Hon. Anne McGlone Burke, Illinois Supreme Court Justice, along with Special Olympics Chicago President Kevin Magnuson, award winning Special Olympian Lucas Vasquez and Lucas' father Vidal Vasquez during the July 12 Board meeting.

"Thousands of children and their families benefit from the Special Olympics organization and this year takes on a special significance since this is the organization's golden anniversary," said MWRD President Mariyana



(L-R) Illinois Supreme Court Justice Anne Burke, Vidal Vasquez, award-winning Special Olympian Lucas Vasquez, and MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos before the resolution presentation ceremony.

Spyropoulos. "We are honored to show our appreciation for everything you do to support and encourage young people who have intellectual differences."

(continued)

MWRD honors golden anniversary of Special Olympics *(cont.)*



(L-R) Special Olympics Chicago President Kevin Magnuson, award-winning Special Olympian Lucas Vasquez, Illinois Supreme Court Justice Anne Burke and President Mariyana Spyropoulos applaud Lucas' achievements during the MWRD Board of Commissioners meeting.

In 1962, Eunice Kennedy Shriver, sister of President John F. Kennedy and senators Robert F. Kennedy and Ted Kennedy, invited young people with intellectual disabilities to a day camp she hosted in her backyard with a goal of encouraging them to engage in a variety of sports and physical activities. In the meantime, the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation provided a grant to the Chicago Park District to begin a Special Recreation Program. Burke, at the time a physical education teacher in the Special Recreation Program, traveled to Washington, DC to meet with Mrs. Shriver to seek funding for her idea for a city-wide track meet.

Mrs. Shriver embraced Burke's idea and pledged the Kennedy Foundation's financial support for an expanded, multi-sport, nationwide event for persons with intellectual differences. Within eight years, "Camp Shriver" evolved into what is now known as the Special Olympics, and Chicago played an important role as the first International Special Olympics Summer Games were held at Soldier Field in 1968.

"I would like to thank you for this honor you have bestowed upon us," said Justice Burke. "The MWRD has protected all of our lives for almost 130 years and we are so grateful for this and for this resolution. This is an ex-



Ducks are released into the Chicago River from the William P. Fahey Bridge at Columbus Drive.

citing time for our great city and the Special Olympics and Chicago Park District. Special Olympics has absolutely transformed lives, leveled the playing field and improved the quality of life for children and adults with intellectual differences who were previously cast aside."

A sculpture will be unveiled to kick-off a festival to celebrate the golden anniversary at Soldier Field July 17 – July 21 which will launch the year-long global Special Olympics 50th Anniversary celebrations. The final Chicago event takes place on August 9 as the annual Chicago Ducky Derby festival runs from 10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. at Pioneer Court near Tribune Tower. At 1 p.m. thousands of ducks will be released into the river at the Irv Kupcinet bridge at Wabash Ave. Proceeds from the Derby benefit more than 20,000 athletes across Illinois; this location is new this year.

"Every day Special Olympics transforms lives through the joy of competition," said Vice President Barbara McGowan. "Globally, there are more than 5 million athletes in 172 countries and over a million volunteers, so it is with great pride and admiration that the Board honors this organization."

Additional information about the Chicago Ducky Derby can be found at www.duckrace.com/chicago.

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Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

Established in 1889, the MWRD (www.mwrld.org) is an award winning, special purpose government agency responsible for used water treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois.