



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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Young scientists' research dazzles audience at MWRD's celebration of STEM



Science fair winners and their families tour the Stickney Water Reclamation Plant.

Science fair winners from throughout Cook County were honored at the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago's (MWRD) "A Celebration of STEM" event designed to encourage environmental sciences education and equip students with an understanding of the MWRD's critical work.

New this year, the MWRD's annual science fair turned to the Stickney Water Reclamation Plant, where students displayed their engaging work to MWRD commissioners, scientists and staff and garnered feedback, and support. Following a small expo of the students work, the MWRD provided a lesson of their own by providing a guided tour of their facilities and labs and presentations by commissioners and staff.

"We congratulate the students on their award-winning research and hope during this learning process they have gained a greater interest in environmental sciences and ecology, as well as a better understanding of their water environment," said MWRD President Kari K. Steele.



Science fair winners with (front row, L-R): Executive Director Brian Perkovich, Commissioner Frank Avila, President Kari K. Steele, and Commissioner Debra Shore



Science Fair winners tour the Stickney WRP.

"A Celebration of STEM" honored students, ranging in grades seven through twelve, who participated in the annual Chicago Public or Non-Public Schools science fairs held in March at the Illinois Institute of Technology and the Museum of Science and Industry. The MWRD selected the 50 winning students based on their research in the categories of Environmental Science and Ecology. *(continued)*

Young scientists' research dazzles audience at celebration of STEM, *cont.*

"We are always happy to welcome and engage with talented students interested in STEM education, because it's these future leaders who will be responsible for protecting the next generation's important water resources," said MWRD Chairman of Finance Frank Avila. "Based on our interactions today, our future is clearly in capable hands."

The students and their guests attended a STEM career presentation by MWRD Principal Environmental Scientist Dr. Geeta Rijal, who discussed her role and her journey to becoming an expert in the field of microbiology. The students were then given a unique tour bringing them face to face with the people and operations working behind the scenes and at the forefront of wastewater treatment to protect the region's water supply source, Lake Michigan, and the health of the residents, visitors and environment in Cook County.

"We commend these students, as well as the teachers and parents who have supported them," said Commissioner Debra Shore. "The research that they have done is remarkable, and it bodes well for the future – not just their individual futures as scholars, but our future as a society."

The MWRD has participated in the Chicago Public and Non-Public Schools' annual science fairs as a "Special Judge" for more than 20 years.

2019 Science Fair Winners

Grade 7

Sam Gianfrancesco, Saint Luke School
Taylor Nicholoff, Robert Healy Elementary School
Theodore Schuler, Jonathan Burr Elementary School
David Venegas, Pope Francis Global Academy

Grade 8

Ahmad Abdullah, College Prep School of America
Sainabu Akinlolu, John T. McCutcheon Elementary School
Maee Borders, St. Francis Borgia School
Melanie Brito, Smyser Elementary School
Dominic Di Brizzi, Divine Providence School
Jerry Contreras, Joseph Jungman Elementary School
Yonatan De La Mora, Joseph Jungman Elementary School
Briana Edwards, CICS-Longwood
Raymond Gorz, St. Daniel the Prophet
Talia Henderson, Burnham Elementary Inclusive Academy
Riya Joshi, Whitney M. Young Magnet High School
Hameedullah Khan, College Prep School of America
Wilfred Mendez, St. Francis Borgia School
Andrea Stavropoulos, Divine Providence School
Evan Wachula, St. Monica Academy
Bushra Yazjanova, Science Academy of Chicago

Grade 9

Hani Abdallah, Universal School
Yazan Asfour, Universal School
Rida Azhar, College Prep School of America
Thomas Haran, Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences
Nusaiba Hashmi, College Prep School of America
Nicole Sandu, Albert G. Lane Technical High School

Grade 10

Maaria Firdaus, College Prep School of America
Jade Jackson, Robert Lindblom Math & Science Academy HS
Ruwaida Khadeer, College Prep School of America
Zufsha Khan, Stephen T. Mather High School

Grade 11

Ewan Evans, Von Steuben Metropolitan Science Center
Steven Li, Walter Payton College Preparatory High School
Maeghan O'Laughlin, Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences
Amalia Petropoulos, Mather High School
Helen Sa Tsu, Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences
Markel Venson, Von Steuben Metropolitan Science Center

Grade 12

Natalia Goral, Roald Amundsen High School
Mariya Mujahid, Universal School
Carissa Ramon, Horizon Science Academy McKinley Park
Kristine Schoenecker, Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences
Robert Szymczyk, Albert G. Lane Technical High School
Tanzanikia Taylor, Michele Clark Academic Prep Magnet High School

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.