

Big Fish Ball honors Chicago River conservationists



Friends of the Chicago River announced the winners of its Chicago River Blue Awards at the 12th annual Big Fish Ball on June 13.



By **Candace Jordan**
Chicago Tribune

JUNE 20, 2017, 5:32 PM

Friends of the Chicago River announced the winners of its Chicago River Blue Awards on June 13 at the 12th annual Big Fish Ball. Held at the Westin Chicago River North, the awards recognized the work of professionals in the planning, design and building industries who are transforming the Chicago River through creative projects that benefit people, water and wildlife.

Over 500 supporters were offered up-close-and-personal encounters with a variety of wildlife during the reception. Baby raccoons, a groundhog, baby porcupine, great horned owl, red-tailed hawk and skunk underlined the importance of the river to the animals' survival. The critters were courtesy of Wings and Talons

t and Big Run Wolf Ranch in Lockport. Three
1 Fund, located in the city. A virtual reality tour

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Margaret Frisbie, FCR's executive director, welcomed guests and introduced Mayor [Rahm Emanuel](#). Back when he was a newly elected congressman, Emanuel introduced the Great Lakes Restoration Act. "Our mayor supported clean water and sewage disinfection before it was politically polite," said Frisbie.

Emanuel accepted the organization's top honor, the Blue Ribbon Award, on behalf of the city (in conjunction with Ross Barney Architects) for the creation of the Chicago Riverwalk. He noted the Financial Times recently named it the "best new park in the United States."

Jacqueline Loewe, an FCR board member and founding partner of Sheridan Park Consulting, presented five additional Chicago River Blue Awards for excellence in river-sensitive design during the program in the Grand Ballroom.

Award-winning projects included Wolf Point West, a riverside development in downtown Chicago created by BIT Wolf Point West Investors; Riverline, a development by Perkins + Will that restores the south bank of the river; Wescott Park Stormwater Storage Facility, conceived by the Village of Northbrook; Calumet & Southeast Chicago Lakefront Region Wayfinding Concept, a conservation plan that spans 900 square miles of the Calumet river system, designed by The Lakota Group; and the Calumet Corridor RainReady Plan, a project to address excessive flooding in the Calumet area, designed by The Center for Neighborhood Technology.

"The winners were selected because their projects protect the river from stormwater runoff, provide habitat for wildlife or create places for people to enjoy nature and the river, or all three," Frisbie said.

Co-chaired by David Wong and Robert Sit, the event raised over \$260,000 in support of FCR's mission to improve and protect the river system. An after-party offered guests breathtaking views of the skyline and river during an hourlong Shoreline Sightseeing Cruise.

"Our natural resources are sacred. We all need to work together to protect our air, water, wild creatures and our wild lands. If we do that, we protect people too," said Frisbie.

Freelance writer Candace Jordan is involved with many local organizations, including some whose events she covers.

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