

# DC Water Branches Out With New Publishing and Merchandise Arm

INTERVIEW WITH PAMELA MOORING | WASHINGTON, DC

## CAN YOU TELL US A BIT ABOUT WHY YOU STARTED THE BLUE DROP PROJECT?

Blue Drop was created four years ago to generate non-ratepayer revenue by marketing DC Water's products and technologies to help reduce the impact of rate increases on our customers. We have an eclectic set of products and services including Bloom, our Class-A exceptional quality biosolid that is used as a fertilizer and soil amendment. We market event space in our LEED Platinum Headquarters building (see [www.bluedrop.co/services/facility-rental](http://www.bluedrop.co/services/facility-rental)), we lease space for cell towers, market wastewater treatment methods developed by our Innovations Team and sell software products that were developed for customer service and operations.

We created *Wendy, Where Does Our Wastewater Go?* (see photo, top right) to generate revenue as well as to help educate the public about a vital part of our purpose in a fun and accessible way.



## WHAT DO SALES OF BLUE DROP PRODUCTS GO TOWARDS? HOW DOES REVENUE FROM BLUE DROP GO TOWARDS SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY?

Ten percent of each sale goes to the SPLASH fund, a DC Water program that helps customers maintain critical water and sewer service in times of financial emergencies. It is a last resort funding source for those facing disconnection. SPLASH is funded by donations from employees, via payroll deduction, Board members, and customers through bill roundup and donations of varying amounts. Anyone can donate by reaching out to the Greater Washington Urban League, which administers the program, at [utilities@gwul.org](mailto:utilities@gwul.org).

## TELL US ABOUT THE TEAM AT BLUE DROP AND DC WATER THAT HELPED BRING WENDY TO LIFE?

Torri Epperson is the author and a DC Water employee whose primary focus is community outreach through environmental education. Torri has also spent time in the classroom as a STEM teacher and brought this background to the project. The illustrator and designer are both local university students. Francesca Valente, Vice President at Blue Drop, supported the team in bringing the book to print.

## WHAT WAS THE PROCESS OF PRODUCING AN EDUCATIONAL CHILDREN'S BOOK LIKE?

The process of producing the book began with Torri brainstorming and writing the storyline. Process engineers from Blue Plains played an integral role in reviewing the book and ensuring accuracy



of illustrations and process descriptions. Local teachers reviewed the story to give their feedback, such as encouraging us to use the correct jargon for processes so students can better learn the process and increase their vocabulary. Once the storyline was ready, we posted a Request for Proposals to choose our illustrator. Torri and Deborah Han collaborated on the ideas for the illustrations, and Torri shared images of the processes, so the illustrations are realistic.

**TELL US ABOUT WENDY'S FIRST BOOK, *WENDY, WHERE DOES OUR WASTEWATER GO?* WHAT ARE YOU HOPING TO ACCOMPLISH WITH THE SERIES?**

In Wendy's first book, she takes a group of students on a journey to learn about what happens to our water when we are finished using it. We want this book to help children – and their parents – understand the wastewater process. We hope that focusing on wastewater will contribute to a more robust understanding of what it means to care about water. We also hope it leads to a generation that adopts practices that protect the wastewater system and the environment.

**WHAT HAS THE RESPONSE BEEN LIKE TO WENDY - FROM BOTH CHILDREN AND ADULTS?**

Feedback has been positive. Parents have said they enjoy the opportunity to satisfy their children's curiosity about how the wastewater process works in their own region.

Children in the community love Wendy, so this opportunity to learn something new from her about where water goes after we use it has proven to be equally educational and exciting.

**TELL US ABOUT HOW YOU HAVE WORKED TO GET WENDY BOOKS IN FRONT OF CHILDREN? HOW HAVE YOU HELPED EDUCATORS INTEGRATE WENDY INTO THEIR CURRICULUM?**

We are in circulation at the local library and are working with local bookstores to be on the shelves. We've donated copies to classrooms, local reading nonprofits, and Little Free Libraries. We have included a resource page that calls out important vocabulary, asks guiding questions and even has an experiment where students can create their own wastewater to treat.

**CAN OTHER UTILITIES SHARE WENDY'S STORY? ARE THERE PLANS FOR EXPANSION?**

We would love to share this resource with other utilities! We can alter parts of the story to personalize it and let utilities make it their own local resource. Utilities can purchase the license to the book to print it on their own.

**DO YOU HAVE NEW STORIES LINED UP FOR WENDY?**

Wendy's next journey will show students how water gets to their taps!

**IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE ABOUT THE WENDY SERIES, OR BLUE DROP IN GENERAL, THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH THE REST OF THE CLEAN WATER COMMUNITY?**

We created this book as a resource for the community – not only our local community in the form of our ratepayers but also our utility community. We've got many more ideas in the pipeline for Wendy. Please reach out if you have any ideas for her as well!

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**Pamela Mooring** is the Communications Manager at DC Water in Washington, DC.