

FWEA Students & Young Professionals 2025 Winter Newsletter

Message from the Chair

Welcome to the winter edition of the FWEA SYPC Newsletter! We're excited to share recent achievements and upcoming opportunities throughout our community.

First, congratulations to the University of South Florida teams on their outstanding performance at the WEFTEC Student Design Competition. SustainaCore earned first place in the Circular Water Category and ReNew Engineering Solutions placed third in the Water Environment Category.

Our committee is preparing for another year of the FWEA Internship Program, aiming to connect students and young professionals with valuable opportunities in Florida's water sector.

We are also excited to promote the InFLOW Program, which introduces students from underrepresented groups to careers in the water industry and offers full support for attending FWRC. To expand this initiative, we are looking for volunteers to do outreach at local technical and community colleges and encourage students to apply. Your participation can make a significant difference.

Looking ahead, we are planning FWRC 2026 in Daytona Beach, April 26–29, where the SYPC will coordinate the student competition, workshop, and networking event.

Thank you to our members for your continued outreach on campuses across the state—reminder: nominations for the Young Professional of the Year Award are now open. **We appreciate your dedication and look forward to an exciting year ahead!**

Olga Mikhailchishina, EI
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In This Issue

- Message from the Chair
- FWEA S&YPC Leadership Org Chart
- SYPC Engagements
- Scholarship Opportunities
 - InFLOW Program
 - YP Utility Workers Program
 - Scholars Experiences
- 2025 WEFTEC Highlights
 - USF Team
 - Service Project
- YP of the Year
 - 2026 Nominations
- USF Short Survey
- Upcoming Events
- SYPC 2025 Annual Sponsorship Drive



Florida Water
Environment
Association

STUDENTS & YOUNG
PROFESSIONALS
COMMITTEE



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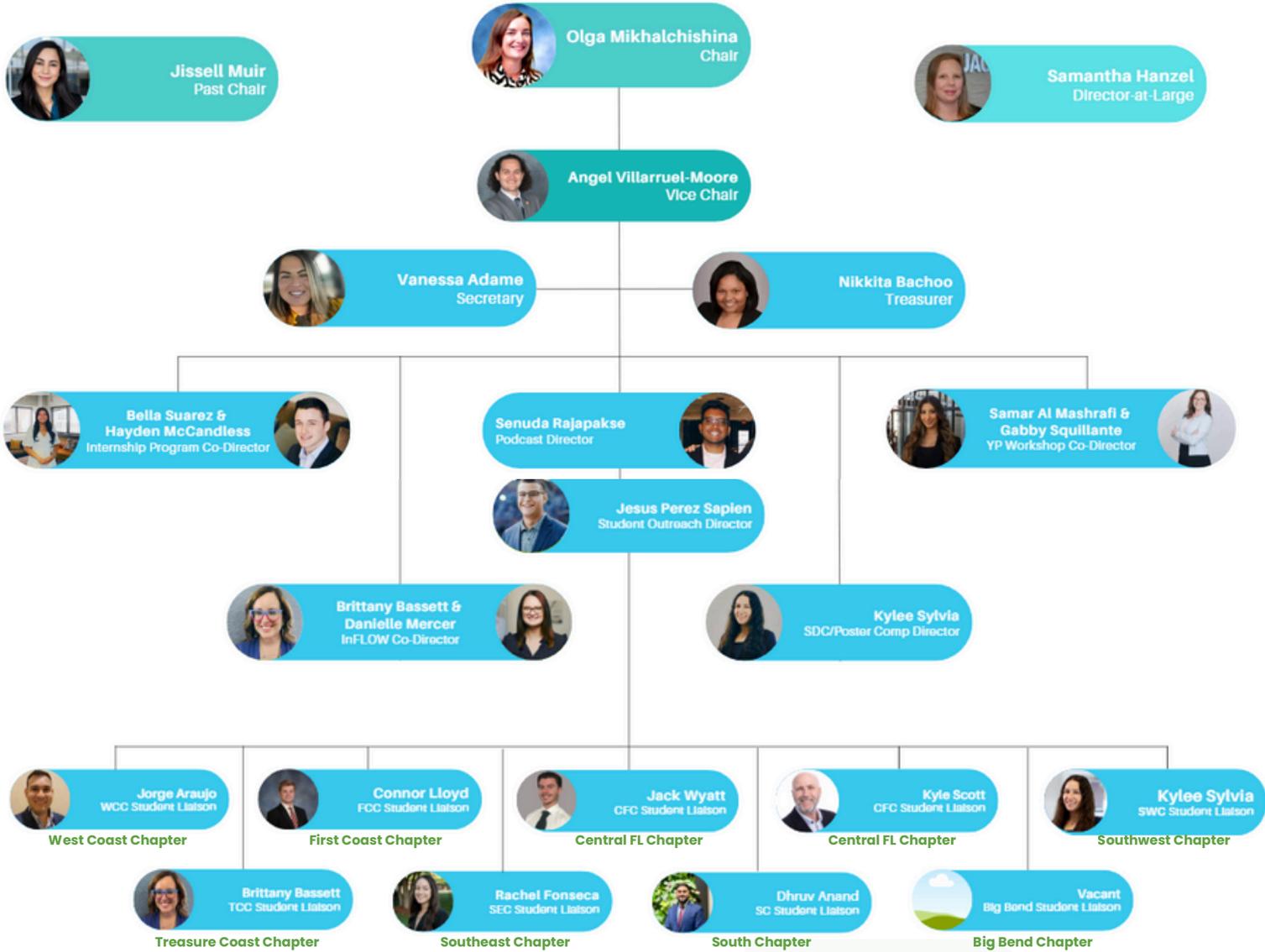
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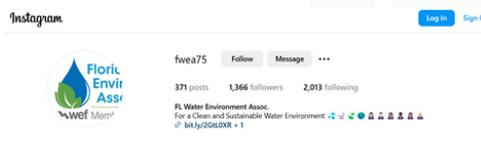


2025-26 SYPC Leadership Organizational Chart



Are you a student or young professional interested in becoming involved. Please contact: sypc@fwea.org

Follow FWEA on social media!





Student & YP Engagements



Central Florida Chapter

In October, the FWEA Central Florida Chapter and FSAWWA Region II partnered with Orange County Utilities to host a joint student tour of one of OCU’s water treatment facilities. Around 20 students from Central Florida colleges attended, gaining an inside look at how a major utility operates and maintains its regional water supply system.

The tour sparked strong engagement, with students asking thoughtful questions about careers, internships, and what day-to-day work in the water industry looks like.

This joint effort continues to strengthen our outreach across student chapters and supports the development of future water and wastewater professionals. We look forward to coordinating additional events with OCU in 2026.

Scott Kyle

Wade Trim.

kscott@wadetrim.com





South Florida Chapter

On behalf of the Florida Water Environment Association (FWEA) – South Florida Chapter, we had the privilege of visiting Florida International University (FIU) in Miami, FL, to engage with environmental engineering students in an interactive, informative session. The meeting provided an overview of FWEA, emphasizing the organization’s vision, mission, and commitment to advancing a sustainable water environment through professional development, technical knowledge sharing, and active student and young professional involvement.

Students learned about FWEA South Florida Chapter activities and initiatives, technical committees, and the WEFTEC conference. We also explored ways for students to connect with the chapter and begin their involvement, including joining technical committees, volunteering, networking with industry professionals, and accessing career and mentorship opportunities.

A key outcome of the visit was a committee initiative to reestablish the FWEA student chapter at FIU. As part of this effort, registration was initiated for 20 students, with plans to launch the chapter in Spring 2026 formally. This marks an important step toward strengthening student engagement and fostering early professional involvement in the water and wastewater industry.

The visit was highly rewarding, marked by enthusiastic student participation and meaningful discussions. We extend our appreciation to Dr. Hooman Vatankhah (Assistant Professor) for his collaborative approach and strong commitment to industry–academic partnerships. Dr. Vatankhah expressed keen interest in future collaboration between FIU and FWEA, and we look forward to building a lasting partnership that supports student growth and professional development.

Overall, the visit reinforced FWEA’s commitment to empowering the next generation of water professionals and expanding collaboration with academic institutions across Florida.



InFLOW and YP Utility Worker Scholarships

Introducing Future Leaders to Opportunities in Water (InFLOW) Program

The Florida Water Environment Association (FWEA) is excited to offer the **InFLOW Program**, an initiative designed to introduce students from underrepresented backgrounds to rewarding careers in the water industry. Through immersive experiences at the **Florida Water Resources Conference (FWRC)**, participants gain mentorship, networking opportunities, and a firsthand look at the diverse roles shaping our water future.

Eligibility

Students enrolled in technical or community colleges, aged 18 or older, who come from underrepresented groups and demonstrate an interest in the water sector are encouraged to apply.

Scholarship Benefits

Selected participants receive:

- Travel reimbursement (up to \$800)
- Full conference registration
- Meals, banquets, and networking receptions
- One-year FWEA student membership

Important Dates

- **Application Window:** December 1, 2025 – February 1, 2026
- **Orientation:** March 2026 (virtual)
- **Conference:** April 26–29, 2026 at Daytona Beach Ocean Center

Don't miss this chance to connect with industry leaders and explore a future in water! For details and to apply, visit [FWEA InFLOW Program](#).

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Water

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InFLOW and YP Utility Worker Scholarships

Young Professional Utility Workers Scholarship

The Florida Water Environment Association (FWEA) is proud to support the next generation of water professionals through the **YP Utility Workers Scholarship**. This program helps young professionals working in utilities gain access to valuable networking and learning opportunities at the **Florida Water Resources Conference (FWRC)**.

Eligibility

- Is an active YP member of FWEA or meets the requirements of YP (A Young Professional is an individual in the water quality profession with five years or less work experience in the industry and who is under 35 years old).
- Is currently working in the industry, including but not limited to: Treatment Plant Operator Trainee, Operator, Plant Mechanic, Distribution, Collections, Hydrants, Meters, Instrumentation, or SCADA.

Scholarship Benefits

- Travel reimbursement
- Complimentary FWRC registration
- Meals, banquets, and networking receptions
- Access to technical sessions, exhibits, and networking events
- Lodging
- One-year YP FWEA membership

Important Dates

- **Application Deadline:** March 1, 2026
- **Conference Dates:** April 26–29, 2026, at Daytona Beach Ocean Center

This scholarship is a fantastic way for utility professionals to expand their knowledge and build lasting connections in the water sector. [Apply now to advance your career!](#)

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InFLOW and YP Utility Worker Scholarships



My experience as a scholar was both thrilling and deeply meaningful. I currently work for Miami-Dade County at one of Florida's largest wastewater treatment facilities, where I've gained hands-on experience in solids handling, cryogenics, and plant operations, including monitoring effluent quality and treatment processes. This scholarship allowed me to step beyond my own facility and see how interconnected and expansive the water industry truly is.

Through the FWEA event, I had the privilege of meeting passionate and knowledgeable professionals from across Florida, including operators, engineers, researchers, and equipment manufacturers specializing in filtration, pumping, biosolids, and grit removal systems.

The conference brought together organizations such as FWEA, FWRC, FSAWWA, and FWPCOA, and featured programs like InFlow, the Student Design Competition, facility tours, and networking events. Hearing from respected speakers and connecting with peers strengthened my appreciation for the collaborative effort required to protect and improve our water systems.

FWEA's mission to promote a clean and sustainable water environment resonated deeply with me. Clean water is often taken for granted, yet it is a privilege that requires constant innovation, dedication, and stewardship. Visiting natural ecosystems and learning more about the treatment process reinforced how critical our work is to public health and environmental protection. What once felt like a vast state became a connected network of professionals united by a shared purpose.

Receiving the YP Utility Scholarship was truly an honor and a defining moment in my career. It affirmed my desire to grow beyond operations and pursue engineering, with the goal of helping design and improve wastewater treatment systems that protect ecosystems and communities alike. I am incredibly grateful to the Water and Sewer Department, my leadership, mentors, and colleagues for their support and belief in my potential. This experience has inspired me to continue striving for excellence and encourages others to engage, participate, and discover the incredible opportunities within the water industry.

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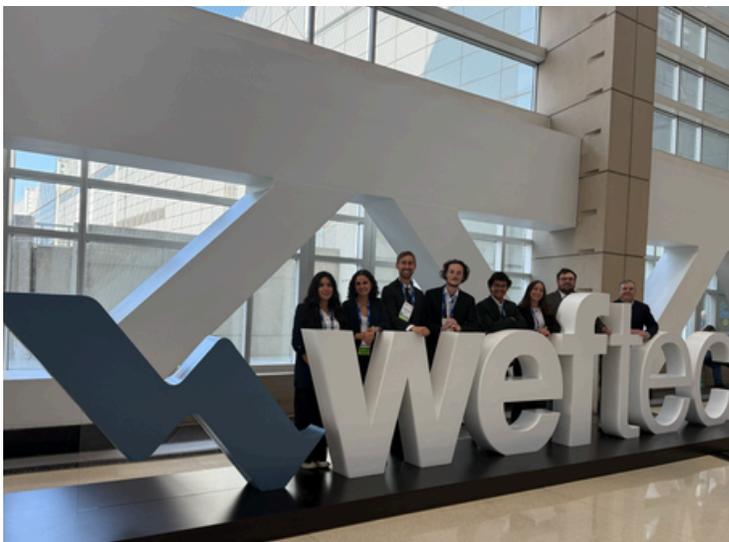
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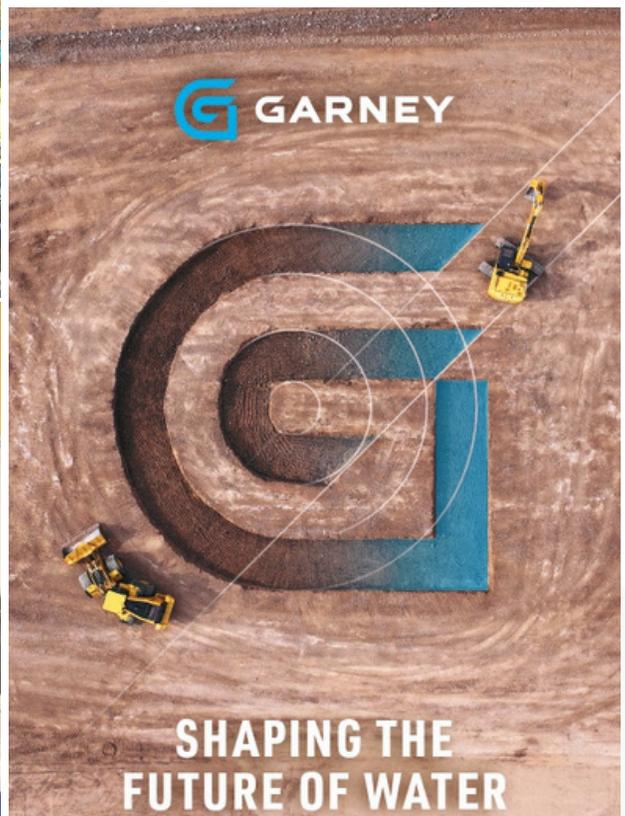
2025 WEFTEC Highlights

WEFTEC was an unforgettable experience for our team, SustainaCore. Competing in the Student Design Competition and winning 1st place in the Circular Water Economy Division was a huge honor. Our project, "From Waste to Worth: Optimization of Biosolids at Howard F. Curren AWTP," allowed us to collaborate with the City of Tampa and recommend a sustainable solution, solar thermal pasteurization by Merrell Bros., Inc., that transforms biosolids into a Florida-registered fertilizer. During the competition, we also met other students with innovative and amazing projects. Some even travelled all the way from Costa Rica or Canada! Beyond the competition, we had the chance to explore Chicago, celebrate with some delicious deep-dish pizza, and connect with professionals from across the country. The SDC is a fantastic opportunity for students to gain exposure to the industry, meet potential mentors, and attend the greatest water event in the world!



Making an Impact 2025: WEFTEC Service Project

Aldridge Elementary School located in the historic and predominantly African American Chatham Community on the South Side of Chicago now has a new garden where students can learn hands-on science outdoors, surrounded by native plantings and pollinators. The school has a saying “everything grows in the garden”, which perfectly encapsulated how this could be where their future environmental stewards, STEM kids, and garden lovers come from while the garden itself grows. This effort was a collaboration between the Aldridge Elementary, Collective Learning Lab, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District, the Chicago Department of Water Management (DWM), and GreenPrint Partners, as well as all the volunteers that came out to help plant the seeds. Serving as a reminder that water quality and treatment is also exceptionally critical to a garden’s vitality.



Making an Impact 2025: WEFTEC Service Project



A ribbon-cutting ceremony was organized to commemorate the special partnership between DWM Commissioners Randy Conner and Kari Steele, the Water Environment Federation (WEF), and all who collaborated to bring this idea to life, marking the inauguration of this garden. Chicago's DWM provides about 750 million gallons to nearly 1 billion gallons of fresh drinking water a day to approximately 5.3 million residents for the 120 Cook County Government Suburbs, DuPage County, and soon the Will County Executive. DWM manages a total of 41% of the fresh drinking water that is distribution across the State of Illinois.

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FWEA YP of the Year Nominations



"I feel honored and grateful to have received the FWEA Young Professional of the Year Award! I want to thank FWEA for this recognition, as well as the mentors, colleagues, and peers who have supported me along the way. Being part of Florida's water and wastewater community is incredibly meaningful to me, and this award is a great reminder of the dedication of so many professionals committed to serving our communities. I'm looking forward to another year of continued involvement with the Central Florida Chapter and Students and Young Professionals Committee, as well as checking out this year's national YP Summit!"

Angel Villarruel-Moore

Carollo Engineers
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Nominations are now Open for FWEA YP of the Year 2026! To submit a nomination, either complete the [Online Nomination Form](#) or download the Nomination Form ([PDF version](#) / [Word version](#)) and email it to the SYPC chair by following the instructions listed on the nomination form.



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USF Professional Master's Degree Programs

Faculty in USF's Civil & Environmental Engineering department are looking for ways to better serve Tampa Area Environmental professionals. If you've ever thought of getting a master's degree in Environmental or Water Resources Engineering, we would appreciate if you would fill out a **short survey** regarding the best class times and teaching modes for you (just 5 questions – we promise!).

USF also has a pathway for students whose first degree is not in engineering who can take prerequisites and graduate-level courses and qualify for the FE exam and eventually become a PE. More information about our grad programs can be found **here**.



USF's Short Survey



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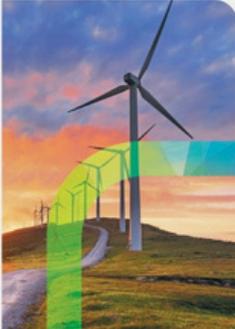
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Upcoming Events

Manasota Chapter

February 5

Annual Clay Shoot
10:30 AM – 01:00 PM

Southwest Chapter

January 22

Southwest Chapter S&YP Networking Social
05:00 PM – 7:30 PM

February 27

11th Annual Sporting Clays Charity Tournament
08:00 AM – 04:00 PM

Treasure Coast Chapter

February 26

FWEA Treasure Coast Chapter Spring
Technical Luncheon
10:30 AM – 01:30 PM

West Coast Chapter

January 21

FWEA WCC – Axe Throwing Event
07:00 PM – 08:30 PM

February 5

Quarterly Luncheon
12:00 PM – 01:00 PM

February 27

11th Annual Sporting Clays Charity Tournament
11:00 AM – 05:00 PM

Conference

April 26 – 29

Florida Water Environmental Conference
Visit fwrc.org to learn more



Additional Events listed at:
[FWEA Calendar of Events](#)

Looking to get involved in the FWEA's SYPC?

Email: sypc@fwea.org

Fill out our [interest form!](#)

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SYPC 2026 Annual Sponsorship Drive

Support the FWEA Students and Young Professionals Committee (SYPC) by Becoming a Sponsor Today!



Sponsorship Levels

SILVER LEVEL (\$500):

- Company logo displayed on **SYPC website** and at the **FWRC Student Design Competition**
- **Business card ad** in SYPC newsletters
- One **FWRC YP Workshop** ticket

GOLD LEVEL (\$1000):

- Company logo displayed on **SYPC website** and at the **FWRC Student Design Competition**
- Receive **resumes** from students actively involved in SYPC initiatives
- Semiannual **quarter page ad** in SYPC newsletters
- Two **FWRC YP Workshop** tickets
- Company **job portal** included on the FWEA Internship Program website

Your Donation Supports the Following Events

STUDENT DESIGN COMPETITION

First Place teams receive a Norm Casey Scholarship from FWEA plus travel allowance to attend WEFTEC to compete in the National Competition.

SYPC POSTER COMPETITION

First and Second Place winners receive monetary prizes.

YP OF THE YEAR AWARD

Recipient receives travel allowance to attend National YP Summit.

STUDENT OUTREACH

Funds are allocated each year to support various student activities.

Students & Young Professionals Committee 2026 Sponsorship Form

Become a Sponsor today! Complete this form and return it, including payment information, **by March 27th, 2026.**

Please send physical payments to:

Nikkita Bachoo
C/O Carollo Engineers, Inc.

Mail: 200 E Robinson St, Suite
#1400, Orlando, FL 32801
Office: 407-408-3487
Email: nbachoo@carollo.com

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Payment Information:

Amount to be charged: \$500 (Silver) \$1000 (Gold) Other (Please Specify)

Payment Method (please select one): \$ _____

Credit Card: to pay by credit card please visit our online registration page: [FWEA SYPC Sponsorship](#). Under Package Selection, select the appropriate "Sponsorship Level"; for sponsorships other than Gold or Silver levels, enter your sponsorship amount under the Donation section. Then, press Continue to complete your registration.

Check: please make checks payable to "**Florida Water Environment Association**" with memo line "**SYPC Sponsorship**".

Check Number:

Please include your **Company Logo** and either **Quarter Page Ad** (Gold Sponsors) or **Business Card** (Silver Sponsors) along with this Sponsorship Registration Form.

Contact **Nikkita Bachoo** (nbachoo@carollo.com) if you have any questions.