

## **MEDIA CONTACTS**

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## **Embracing Our Differences Receives Tourist Development Cultural/Arts Grant**

*The \$52,082 grant will help fund the organization's 2019 exhibition season, which is scheduled for January 19 through March 15 in Sarasota's Bayfront Park.*

(Sarasota, FL) The Sarasota County Commission awarded Embracing Our Differences a \$52,082 Tourist Development Cultural/Arts grant to help fund its 2019 exhibition season, which runs January 19 through March 15 in Sarasota's Bayfront Park. For 15 years, Embracing Our Differences has drawn on the passion and perception of artists, children and others to create powerful statements of diversity and acceptance in its annual outdoor public art exhibition consisting of 45 billboard-sized works of art and accompanying quotes. The scale and impact of this outdoor exhibition has continued to grow, attracting more than 2.7 million visitors since its inception. This exhibit is the heart of a year-round program of activities designed to use art as a catalyst to create awareness of and promote diversity.

"This grant will help us continue reaching new audiences outside our immediate area," says Sarah Wertheimer, the associate executive director of Embracing Our Differences. According to Wertheimer, this year's exhibit attracted 202,000 visitors, of which 19.5 percent came from counties in Florida outside of Sarasota County; 21.5 percent were visitors from out of state; and two percent were international tourists.

“As an open-air, free exhibit placed in an easy-to-access location, Embracing Our Differences is a natural draw for visitors,” says Wertheimer. “In the past 15 years, it’s become a top cultural destination for people from around the state and the country. Embracing Our Differences is a critical component of what defines our region as a sophisticated arts destination.”

Wertheimer says that the response to the call for artwork and inspirational quotes for the 2018 exhibit resulted in more than 8,000 entries pouring in from 98 countries and 41 states. Students from 227 schools around the world submitted artwork or quotes to the juried exhibit; 54 of this year’s winners were students. **A call for art and quote submissions for the 2019 exhibit is ongoing through October 15.** For more information about this and Embracing Our Differences, visit [www.embracingourdifferences.org](http://www.embracingourdifferences.org).

The Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County administers almost \$2 million each year in Tourist Development Cultural/Arts grants. Grants are available to non-profit organizations with a recognized ability to produce, present and promote cultural and arts activities that appeal to tourists.

*For more information about this exhibit or Embracing Our Differences, call 941-404-5710, or visit [www.embracingourdifferences.org](http://www.embracingourdifferences.org).*

### **About Embracing Our Differences**

Embracing Our Differences is a not-for-profit organization that uses the transformational power of art and education to celebrate and promote the diversity of the human family. It accomplishes this through an annual, large-scale outdoor juried art exhibition and a comprehensive series of educational initiatives, programs and resources designed for teachers and students. Visit [www.embracingourdifferences.org](http://www.embracingourdifferences.org).