Our Mission / Our Vision

Through the transformative power of the arts, we educate and inspire to create a better world. We envision a world that embraces diversity, respects differences and actively rejects hatred and prejudice.
We are very proud of the relationships developed with our Community Partners – each of which plays an integral role in the success of our initiatives. Without their support, our work would not be possible.
Our Team

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Liz Chicoine, Office Coordinator
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*In Memoriam:
Carroll Buchanan &
Carol Poteat-Buchanan

* Of Blessed Memory
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>A Message from our Co-Founder &amp; Board Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Exhibit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 10</td>
<td>Education Initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Art Builds Community, Brian Hersh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 - 13</td>
<td>By The Numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 - 15</td>
<td>Art Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 - 115</td>
<td>2020 Art &amp; Quotations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td>Submit Art &amp; Quotations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117</td>
<td>Community Collaborations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118 - 124</td>
<td>Sponsors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125</td>
<td>Special Thanks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cover Art: I Have a Dream by Shangxi Wu, Page 58  
Catalog Design by Jason Owens, webemissary.com
Good News About Our Human Family

Our world is filled with diversity. Sadly, it’s not filled with acceptance—at least within the human family. People attack others who are different. Nations do the same. Day after day, the news is filled with such sad stories. But the human family isn’t entirely dysfunctional. I’d like to share some good news with you.

Millions of people around the world are talking about creating a sense of unity. Millions of people are rejecting hate and seeking common ground. For the past 17 years, tens of thousands of these people have shared this message of hope with us here at Embracing Our Differences, and each year, we’ve passed that message on through our outdoor exhibition featuring inspirational artwork and statements.

This year stopped us in our tracks.

We received a monumental 16,118 submissions from 127 countries, all 50 states and 398 schools!

This massive response affirms in such a powerful way that EOD is not a voice crying in the wilderness. Thousands of people from around the world, with diverse backgrounds, share our deepest convictions.

Their art and words tell us, over and over, that we can replace hostility and division with respect and kindness. Honoring what makes us different and celebrating what we have in common is our touchstone.

These core truths are simple. But there are infinite ways to express it. And the people who respond each year continue to surprise us with their deeply felt creative expressions.

Each submission is like a message in a bottle. Each heartfelt plea for peace and freedom, love and understanding is a small miracle in its own right. These small seeds, planted in hearts and minds, do create positive change.

Our universal message goes beyond the realm of ideas. It’s a call to action. Coming together, when a schoolmate is bullied. Not ignoring racist and homophobic slurs. Intentionally performing an act of kindness. Being the change you wish to see in the world!!!

That’s my commitment. And the commitment of all of us at EOD, from everyone on the board, to every staff member, to every volunteer.

We believe in the human family.

—— Dennis McGillicuddy
Board Chair and Co-Founder
The Exhibit

The centerpiece of Embracing Our Differences is a juried, outdoor art exhibit featuring 50 billboard-sized images created by local, national and international artists, writers and students reflecting their interpretations of the theme “enriching lives through diversity.”

The exhibit continues its phenomenal growth. The 2020 exhibit received 16,118 submissions representing all 50 states, 127 counties and 398 schools. Last year’s exhibit welcomed 218,000 visitors, bringing total attendance, since 2004, to more than 2.9 million.

“Brought me to tears - took many photos!”
- Out-of-state Tourist

“We would look at the Exhibit all year long if it were up, it’s great stuff. It helps students be accepting of one another and calms the classroom.”
- 2nd Grade Teacher

“For some students, it was the first time they made the connection between art and life.”
- 5th Grade Teacher
Education Initiatives

Our education initiatives represent the most important aspect of our efforts. Students participate year-round in a variety of activities based upon a well-planned curriculum of art appreciation, character development and diversity education. Our education initiatives include:

- Free Field Trips
- Make-A-Day Of It!
- Embracing Our Differences Reading Day
- Bucket Fillers Reading Day
- Unity Day
- Lesson Plans
- Coexistence Clubs
- Student Docents
- In the Classroom
- Educator Workshops
- Community Collaborations

Independent evaluations, as well as our own internal evaluations, have consistently shown that teachers rate the Embracing Our Differences’ education initiatives as “outstanding” or “very good” and as “meaningful and beneficial” experiences for their students.

“True love does not see color, you just love.”

– 5th Grade Student
Education Initiatives

Free Field Trips

Each year, our sponsors generously provide school buses for students to experience the Embracing Our Differences art exhibit and participate in diversity education programs with local organizations. This has become a signature of our education efforts with more than 25,000 students benefiting last school year.

Make-A-Day Of It!

Teachers and students who attend the exhibit are afforded the opportunity, using buses provided by Embracing Our Differences, to participate in diversity education programming with partner organizations including Asolo Rep, Florida Studio Theatre, Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, Mote Marine Laboratory, Sarasota Film Festival, The Ringling Museum of Art, Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall and Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe.

“\'I've heard a change in language from the children after doing the lessons... a real difference in how they speak to each other. They’ll catch themselves or somebody else and remind them, ‘How do you say that in a way that’s not hurtful?’”

- 2nd Grade Teacher
Education Initiatives

Embracing Our Differences Reading Day & Bucket Fillers Reading Day

For the past seven years, Embracing Our Differences has coordinated thousands of volunteers to read to students in Sarasota and Manatee counties. This year, in partnership with the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and an anonymous family foundation, more than 8,300 books selected to stimulate conversations on diversity, bullying, character education and respect for others were provided to local students.

Unity Day

Under the direction of a trained facilitator, students at all seven Sarasota County public high schools participate in powerful, full-day team-building exercises that encourage compassion and empathy while fostering inclusive school environments.

Lesson Plans

Prepared under the supervision of curriculum development specialists from the Sarasota County School district, our age-appropriate lesson plans address applicable learning intentions and success criteria expected of every student in our community.

“This little guy couldn’t wait to read his book! Thank you so much for providing our students with books to keep. It means so much to them!”

– 1st Grade Teacher

“Unity Day reminded me how important it is to give people the opportunity to speak honestly.”

– Sarasota HS Student

“Unity Day showed me that while suffering is a human constant, the way out is to embrace each other.”

– North Port HS Student
Education Initiatives

Coexistence Clubs

These dynamic high school service clubs promote Embracing Our Differences’ vision through the lens of a high school student. They work together to transform their school culture and create a climate where students feel safe and included.

Student Docents

High School docents serve as guides for thousands of students who experience our outdoor exhibit every year. Through guided exploration, docents help younger students arrive at realizations of their own about diversity and acceptance.

In the Classroom

Each year, thousands of local students spend time creating art and quotations for submission to our annual competition. Each student benefits through the creation process, engaging in critical thinking while developing an enhanced sense of self-esteem and social skills.

“Our high school docent did a wonderful job engaging the students and was very well prepared.”

- 2nd Grade Teacher
Education Workshops

Social Emotional Learning
This experiential workshop prepares our teachers, guidance counselors and administrators to bring Unity Day programs into their schools while inspiring cooperation, communication and empathy.

Art Intensive
In partnership with Ringling College of Art + Design, this workshop is designed to reinvigorate educators’ teaching practices while inspiring their art integration skills in all subject areas.

Education Ambassador Program
A year-long program designed to empower teachers to bring the messages of Embracing Our Differences into their classrooms and schools in new and innovative ways. Participants become the EOD experts at their schools and work toward creating more inclusive and respectful school cultures.

“The flipchart was perfect for use in our class. The students were THRILLED to see the pieces we had discussed in class.”
– 3rd Grade Teacher

“I learned how to be a more effective communicator with my students.”
– 6th Grade Teacher

“This program helped me understand that EOD is more than the art exhibit. The practices can and should be incorporated into my daily teaching.”
– Ambassador Program Participant
Art Builds Community

Art builds community. Art changes minds. Art opens hearts. The power of art is at the heart of Embracing Our Differences’ mission and its impact is profound.

I speak from first-hand experience. I’m thrilled to work with EOD as the liaison to Sarasota County Schools. By joining forces, we spread the values of inclusion, diversity, equity, and access to our students and faculty. By bringing art to education, we make a big difference, locally and globally.

I’ve made this transformation my life’s work. I’ve committed my career to building bridges and breaking barriers by making the arts a part of every child’s complete education. For the last several years, I’ve served as the program director for Any Given Child Sarasota, a Kennedy Center initiative ensuring access and equity in arts education on a national scale. The collaboration between EOD and the Sarasota County School District creates a wonderful synergy. It’s one more way we can leverage the power of the arts to impact our community. This season we invite you to be a part of this profound change. Help us change attitudes and actions with the power of art and education.

Brian Hersh
Sarasota County Schools Liaison
By the Numbers

The Exhibit

Our annual art exhibit inspires visitors to cultivate a community of diversity and inclusion.

Attendance

2019

218,000

Since 2004

2,920,000

Submissions

Since 2005

89,895

2020

16,118

Schools

398

States

50

Countries

127
By the Numbers

Education Initiatives

Education Initiatives allow our local students to experience field trips, curriculum and art education that promote kindness and respect.

Make-A-Day Of It!
Student participation in 2019

4,847

Free Field Trips
Students benefiting during the past school year.

25,742

Embracing Our Differences Reading Day
& Bucket Fillers Reading Day

Schools  Classrooms  Books Donated
48  510  9,500

Educator Workshops
Teacher participation

950
“To open your arms to people who are different is to open your mind to infinite possibilities.”

Angela Zhong

12th Grade, Cypress Woods High School
Cypress, Texas
Teacher: Aimee Ruiz

Artist Statement: We look different, we come from different places, we play different instruments, and we sing different notes. However, when we work together, we can create a beautiful symphony.
The Diversity Cube

Siti Rhaudah Fatonah
11th Grade, SMA Plus Negeri 17 Palembang
Palembang, Indonesia
Teacher: Widya Grantina

Artist Statement: This drawing is supposed to show that everyone is different. They have their own characters, faces, abilities, beliefs, and even colors. People today seem to forget that diversity doesn’t need to create hatred and war. We just need to work it out. Together. If we don’t take a part, this world will be filled with hatred, judgement, sadness, depression, and worse. If we accept each other, this world will be filled with smiles, laughter, and bliss. This world is too beautiful to be ignored. Once the Rubik’s Cube is solved, it forms a perfect structure. But if we leave it unsolved, it’s unfinished and messy.

“A difference isn’t a challenge; it’s an opportunity.”

Cutter Johnson
7th Grade, Sarasota Middle School
Sarasota, Florida
Teacher: Kim Farrell
“As kids we just wanted someone to play with us. How is it we became so picky?”

Gary Belton
Los Angeles, California

A Lost Opportunity

Angela Toth
Sarasota, Florida

Artist Statement: This drawing is about acceptance, intergenerational communication, bias and loneliness. The two children in the front-middle spontaneously connect with each other. Their mothers, one for fear and the other for prejudice, lose the opportunity to understand that maybe they have much in common despite their different cultures and beliefs—as women, as mothers, as human beings.
“When children cry, they don’t care about the color of the hand that reaches out; they just want one to hold.”

Alice Cimino

Guayacanes, Dominican Republic

Ageless

Kendra Cerroni
Westford, Massachusetts

**Artist Statement:** Ageless is an acrylic on canvas painting of a light-skinned baby praying with a dark-skinned man. I painted it after seeing a community of various races, backgrounds and nationalities come together in prayer over a tragedy.
"Destroying someone else’s sparkle doesn’t make you shine brighter."

Maddox Volk
6th Grade, Pine View School
Osprey, Florida
Teacher: Linda Lyons

Alienation

Maryana Oliynyk
Lviv, Ukraine
Lviv College of Civil Engineering, Architecture and Design
Teacher: Alina Mulyk

Artist Statement: Remember that you can always grow in this position, but no one wants to feel alone.
"Foreigners are simply new neighbors."

Seth Morano
Sarasota, Florida

Ancestral Passage

Johanna Porter
Issaquah, Washington

Artist Statement: My artwork honors all the brave women who leave behind their homelands, family and friends to seek freedom and a better life in a new place. This mixed-media, digital drawing was created in response to the very real struggle refugees face. This “message in a bottle” is a wish for tolerance and multicultural acceptance.
“When you find your voice, use it to be a force for change.”

Fran Squires, M.Ed.
Osprey, Florida

Be a Voice, Not an Echo

Mackenzie Alley
9th Grade, Saint Kentigern College
Auckland, New Zealand

Artist Statement: I want to represent how we sometimes feel forced to suppress our true identities as we fear society’s judgment, but all that it takes for us to unlock who we are is the words of one person who is not afraid to speak up. I believe we can all be that person if we abandon our fear and learn how to use our power to change. Once we are able to do this, we can inspire others to do the same and take giant strides toward world peace. As Albert Einstein said, “Be a voice, not an echo.”
Be Shore of Yourself

Brooks Tracey
Sarasota, Florida

“Be a wave of acceptance in an ocean of judgement.”

Sara Blake
7th Grade, Sarasota Middle School
Sarasota, Florida
Teacher: Kim Farrell

Artist Statement: Let’s all gather in a common place. A spot to laugh, love, and embrace. We could enjoy a day on the sand. Each of us sporting our special brand. You can be you, and I can be me. We’ll welcome each other’s diversity. Assembled together down by the shore. Limitless opportunities for us to explore. What a wonderful world it would be. All of us gathered down by the sea.
“A simple act of kindness can spark a lifelong friendship.”

Will Grady
8th Grade, Sarasota Middle School
Sarasota, Florida
Teacher: Susy Grandusky

Best Friend

Andi Abdul Halil
Karawang, Indonesia

Artist Statement: My photograph shows harmony, nature and friendship between a snail and a lizard in the wild.
Blowing Bubbles Together

Connie Springer
Cincinnati, Ohio

Artist Statement: I love the photograph I took of my son and husband playing together with bubbles; a moment of kindness and mutual understanding.

“The most beautiful language one can speak is the language of empathy.”

Teodora Andreea Rinciog
Ploiesti, Romania
Can I Touch Your Hair?

Habib Hajallie

Dartford, United Kingdom

Artist Statement: Nuanced prejudices in society serve to constantly remind you that, if you are not white, you are different. This notion seems to be perpetually present in social situations of which people attempt to touch my hair. This may seem perfectly innocuous to be intrigued by hair that is different than the norm, but looking below that veneer of innocent curiosity you will find the root of racial prejudice. For a Caucasian person to ask to touch Afro hair or, in many cases pat one’s head without asking, is a demeaning act with connotations of petting an animal. Thus, making an individual feel less than. The texts used in the collaged ground provide a means of contextualizing the portrait by acting as a catalyst for the expression of Pan-African pride. Pragmatically selected pages from the 1940s “Sierra Leone Studies” book, is a crucial part of the process as this expresses the strong ties I have to my heritage, placing them in a new domain to show exactly where my Afro hairstyle comes from. This work focuses on one aspect of the Afro-British experience in modern society that I hope exemplifies larger sociopolitical issues which will resonate with ethnic minorities.

“One can be present, but not feel included. True inclusion is when you’re seen, heard and respected.”

Jana Quismundo

Berlin, Germany
Come Together

Ash DiCristofalo
Cranford, New Jersey

“In a world full of all talk, be the action that everyone so desperately wants.”

Sophie Annoni
Allentown, Pennsylvania

Artist Statement: Inspired by the fires in the Amazon and the brave young people who speak out on behalf of the environment, I painted this to suggest that even when we are afraid of climate change and uncertain as to what will become of our Earth, we can still join one another in working to build a better world. Even though all the figures in the scene are feeling discouraged, scared, and nervous about the future, and they’re all very different from one another, they have come together to try to put out the fires on Earth as a team. The little girl leading the way is smiling slightly because, even though she’s frightened too, she knows that there is hope if we join others. With all of our diverse strengths combined, we can achieve miracles.
“Pretenders say the right things.
Heroes do the right things.”

Suresh Jayan
Bengaluru, India

Artist Statement: I tried to show how many cultures have different comic book heroes, and how all of them are beloved around the world even though they are different in art styles, color schemes and overall themes.
“A nation is only as strong as its people; a people divided is a nation conquered.”

Jadesola Popoola
Ikeja, Nigeria

Diversity Makes America Great
Andres Castano
Miami, Florida

Artist Statement: Race, culture, religion or political party; each one of us is different and we think and see the world in different ways. We are able to take our thoughts and views and share them with one another to learn, to gain and to become one—to help our community, our country, and our world.
“It isn’t about whether or not you CAN change the world; it’s whether or not you WILL.”

Melanie Way
Wheatfield, Indiana

Each Drop Counts

Sakina Mandsaurwalla
5th Grade, Fazlani L’académie Globale
Mumbai, India
Teacher: Ms. Arwa Udaipurwala

Artist Statement: This topic highlights the growing scarcity of water in rural India. I hope to inspire people in urban India to become aware of how easily resources are available to them—and to think twice before wasting such precious resources. I think it is time for us to open our eyes to the suffering of those around us and value what is available to us. A little caution everyday will go a long way in quenching the thirst of all human beings.
“Don’t speak about me when all you know is my name and not my story.”

Nuris Fanning
Bradenton, Florida

El Sueño Americano
Clifford McDonald
Sarasota, Florida

Artist Statement: People move to the United States from all over the world for many different reasons. This piece represents the opportunity that others see in the United States. Who wouldn’t want to live in a country that promises freedom, education, job opportunities, quality healthcare and an overall better life? But imagine coming to America as a child and being taken away from the hands of your mother. Or as a parent having your child ripped out of your arms. It’s sad to see how some immigrants have been treated for chasing the American Dream.
“A new country.  
A new language.  
A new friend.”

Nuris Fanning  
Bradenton, Florida

Embracing a New Family

Vrinda Ewering  
La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland

Artist Statement: This was created during the wedding ceremony of an Indian bride (me) and a Swiss groom. The little girl only speaks French and German, and I only speak English and Hindi, but here we see that we can connect through expressions and intrigue. The curiosity in the little girl’s eyes when she sees an Indian bride for the first time—the different skin color, jewelry, clothes—makes her wonder. I believe it’s important to accept the choices and habits of those around you, and pick up what you like to shape your own self.
“Injustice wins when people are afraid to rock the boat.”

Will Stone
Destrehan, Louisiana

End War

Antonio Falu
5th Grade, Visible Men Academy
Bradenton, Florida
Teacher: Clifford McDonald

Artist Statement: My drawing illustrates why we should end war. I couldn’t imagine that anyone would actually want to kill another human being. Too many people have died and killing is never the answer; love is.
I don't want to kill him but he wants to kill me.

I don't want to kill him but he wants to kill me.
Artist Statement: I have always loved knitting and creating handmade gifts. My art shows how the most incredible gift you can give is of yourself. In this picture I featured one of my favorite dogs. Chihuahuas are famous for their shivering. I thought it would be cool to have a sheep knitting a sweater for the Chihuahua. The brightly colored yarn surrounding them is in the ROY G BIV order, an acronym for the sequence of hues commonly described as making up a rainbow. In the center, there is a shimmery ball of yarn. It’s remarkable because the sheep made it from himself.

“When a square peg won’t fit into a round hole, widen the hole.”

Rob Nisbet
Peacehaven, United Kingdom

Giving the Gift of Yourself

Andrea Justiniano
Sarasota, Florida
“We have two hands for a reason: one to pull someone up and another to let ourselves be pulled up.”

Jana Quismundo
Berlin, Germany

Homecoming

Emma Sumlin
11th Grade, Founders Classical Academy of Lewisville
Lewisville, Texas
Teacher: Tiffany Sumlin

Artist Statement: “Homecoming” represents a daughter hugging her father after he returns from war. Whether you’re the father who is fighting for his country, or the daughter who is praying for her father to return home, it’s the act of reuniting that is meaningful. This means so much to me because it reminds me of what is most important in life.
“They do not look down upon me; they just never look at me.”

Dandan Lin
Maryville, Tennessee

“I Am
Steve Fabian
Reading, Pennsylvania

Artist Statement: I have always believed that art should inspire an emotion. Joy, sorrow, love, happiness, introspection—even fear, disgust, or hurt. In my work I strive to capture the relationship between our body, our consciousness, and our perception of the world.
I AM HUMAN

I am not black, white, yellow, orange, green or red.
I am not Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist.
I am not Gay, Straight, Lesbian, Transgender or Asexual.
“Living life as an amputee is the ability to stand tall like a mountain, even when you have no feet.”

Marsha Danzig
Dayton, Ohio

I Have a Dream

Shangxi Wu
11th Grade, Amador Valley High School
Pleasanton, California

Artist Statement: My drawing is about a homeless person. Despite being disabled and having little wealth, with limited art materials and colors, he shows healing and a vigorous desire to extend his world by using imagination and embracing his dreams with angel wings. Everyone has the right to dream.
Illusion to Inclusion

Sushma Yadav
Lucknow, India

“...I dream of a world where all people treat each other with respect and dignity regardless of their differences.”

Susan Miller
Carmel, Indiana

Artist Statement: We say that we want diversity and to bring people of different cultures together, but how far have we managed to reach this goal? My art shows how sometimes our behavior is inconsistent with our words. The side mirror of the car is symbolic of a canvas that is capable of showing a mirage that is very different from the reality, just like our words. At the same time, it is also capable of showing us the bigger picture that we fail to understand. Diversity can lead to discomfort, but we can only garner the benefits if we push ourselves out of our comfort zone. Instead of always looking for our commonalities and similarities, we should also talk about how we are unique from one another and embrace our differences. If we always surround ourselves with people similar to us, we’ll never learn or experience anything new. I hope we can continue moving forward from an illusion to actual inclusion.

“I dream of a world where all people treat each other with respect and dignity regardless of their differences.”
“If I tell you my story, will you walk with me and not run?”

Nuris Fanning
Bradenton, Florida

Interactions
Regan Henley
Syracuse, New York

Artist Statement: The best photographs are those where you capture the moment when everything lines up perfectly. The best interactions with people are like that, too. We may find ourselves wrapped up in our own lives, and following our own paths, but sometimes we meet each other at the right moment. For all our differences, and for all our coming and going, sometimes we can run into each other at the right moment where we meet each other as equals.
Artists: Aigul Berkheeva
Moscow, Russia

Emma Kim
10th Grade, Trinity Preparatory School
Winter Park, Florida

Quote: “Be the first to lend a hand to someone who everyone else has turned their backs on.”

Artist Statement: I chose the metaphor of the ugly duckling for my work. “The Ugly Duckling” is a story not only about personal transformation, but also about bullying and non-acceptance of the person merely because they are different.
Lost Innocence

Lina Abojaradeh
Amman, Jordan

"Become an encouraging voice in someone’s hopeless silence."

Tayyaba Munir
Rawalpindi, Pakistan

Artist Statement: This painting was inspired by a 2007 photograph, taken by Fatih Özenbaş, that moved me as no other photograph has before. My interpretation depicts a young girl covering the eyes of her doll from seeing the atrocities of war, even though her eyes are wide open. She chose to protect the doll over herself, something we need to learn to do. If only we were as empathetic to others as she is with her doll. It is so incredibly important that the world learns to embrace each other’s differences because it makes it easier for people to welcome such refugees into their countries and their homes. This little girl is a victim of war simply because she is from a certain geographical region, of a certain ethnicity and faith. We need to work better to provide a better life for all children, no matter where they live or where they are from.
“Let’s work together to change the ‘except’ into ‘accept.’”

Maria

Paulo Rogerio Coppola
São Paulo, Brazil

Artist Statement: In my photograph, we focus on Maria, a homeless woman sitting in the middle of the hustle and bustle of life - invisible to most but the star in this snapshot of everyday life on the streets. In São Paulo, on Sundays, Paulista Avenue is filled with many artists who entertain couples, families, tourists, and the homeless. So once a week, the same sidewalks and corners where these people seek food and shelter are taken over by actors, circus performers and music.

Soumya Rathee
Rohtak, India
Nail Salon

Sammy Cheng
Singapore

Artist Statement: Learn to be human before accusing others. It’s very important to know ourselves accurately.

“Hatred destroys, while kindness mends.”

Xiaomei Gu
Atlanta, Georgia
“Conformity is the practice of a follower; change is the tool of a leader.”

Anish Aradhey
9th Grade, Harrisonburg High School
Harrisonburg, Virginia

Ciro Rocco
7th Grade, Sarasota Middle School
Sarasota, Florida
Teacher: Brooks Tracey

Artist Statement: My artwork depicts what an average teenager focuses on daily. I created this piece to show that teenagers today think about technology, social media and cell phones far too much and they often focus on these things when they are supposed to be focused on things and people that are much more important.
“When you open your mind, you open your world.”

Krista Lardieri
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Pink is for Girls
Napoleon Stewart
Edwardsville, Kansas

Artist Statement: My work addresses gender-specific roles and which toys are meant for which gender. We see a young boy playing with a doll—something that goes against societal norms. We also see a young girl playing with a toy that society would classify is for boys only. I created this because I have a daughter, and, too often, I see kids being told what types of toys they should or shouldn’t play with, based on their gender. Toys are toys and should be viewed as such.
“We can undo many things, but our words are not one of them.”

Kara Larsen
10th Grade, Pine View School
Osprey, Florida
Teacher: Christopher Pauling

Search for the Right Words
Grace Crawford
Luton, United Kingdom

Artist Statement: It only takes a few words to make somebody’s day. It only takes a few words to ruin somebody’s day. Together, we must make the effort to find and use the right words—however hidden they may be in our current hostile climate.
The words are out there — we just need the courage to find them.
“If you are given the choice of ‘being cool’ or ‘being kind,’ choose kind.”

Amanda Long
8th Grade, Sarasota Middle School
Sarasota, Florida
Teacher: Laura Segreto

Social Web
Kajol Shah
Delhi, India

Artist Statement: This is a very accurate showcase of social movements. Social media has connected people and brands. It has given people a platform to share their updates, photos, reviews and opinions. Networking and staying connected with many people has become easier due to social media. People can voice their opinions and reach out to a large audience easily. This can result in very positive and negatives reactions and interactions. Social media can bring us together as well as pull us apart.
SOCIAL MEDIA
“It was a beautiful flower... until you smacked it out of my hand and called it a weed.”

Karlyn Knudson
Spokane Valley, Washington

Solitude

Andreea Zimbru
Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Artist Statement: My main subject of interest is related to the quotidian, the daily life, which may seem common but, through painting, I am able to present a new vision of the present, evoking hidden aspects of reality and generating a different perspective of the human existence.
“Music is made only when different melodies and notes, high and low, come together in symphony.”

Divya Nagothu
10th Grade, Genesis School
Hyderabad, India
Teacher: Nirmala Jyothi

Sounds Good to Me

Ian Zuba
7th Grade, Booker Middle School
Sarasota, Florida
Teacher: Theresa Burbridge

Artist Statement: Diversity is shown through the instruments. Each person is important, just as each instrument is to creating music. Even though one instrument will sound beautiful by itself, when they all play together, they create a unique melody.
Street Children

Wesam Khalil
Behera, Egypt

“Kindness is the only thing you can give and give and it won’t ever run out.”

Basego Segaetsho
Gaborone, Botswana

Artist Statement: I think it’s important to put different images and circumstances side by side in order to understand how much some people suffer.
“If you stand by, then who will stand up?”

Brian Hendricks
6th Grade, Pine View School
Osprey, Florida
Teacher: Fran Squires, M.Ed.

Subway

Yuke Li
Woodside, New York

Artist Statement: In the subway, we are all passengers. No matter where we come from, no matter what religion we have, we are heading together in one direction. We are all the same.
“Crushing another’s spirit doesn’t make you stronger; it makes us all weaker.”

Shashanna Prince
New Ellenton, South Carolina

Artist Statement: Today, bullying is an urgent problem of modern society. The problem is particularly acute among children. Sometimes kids feel like it’s their fault. They feel alone, powerless and reluctant to open up. Bullying is within our power to stop. Do not ignore the issue in any form! Do not be indifferent!
STOP bullying!
“While looking at these wheels, do not ignore my wings, for my legs are disabled, but my wings aren’t clipped.”

Ayesha Khanum
Islamabad, Pakistan

The Help

Mutiara Sakhira
11th Grade, Senior High School 17 Palembang
Palembang, Indonesia
Teacher: Widya Grantina

Artist Statement: Some people think disabled people cannot help others. Disabled people used to be judged by their physical limitations. I often see many offer their help when other people do not. So it’s not about the “disabilities” of a body, but about our effort to jump up and offer help. Help can be a nice smile to make someone’s day, talking with a companion in a garden, or any other simple, small thing that anyone can do.
“No matter what language you speak, you can always understand kindness.”

Nuris Fanning
Bradenton, Florida

The Touch
Isidora Ivanovic
Belgrade, Serbia

Artist Statement: Life’s journey starts with touch. It is the human sense that first starts developing in the womb. It is the first form of communication and first encounter with love. Babies crave close contact because they need to recreate the conditions experienced in the womb. Beloved children grow up to be good and caring people, who give love to other people, regardless of race, sex, religion, social status and other differences. Touch is so simple and so instinctive. For a new life it is the warmest welcome, the safest haven and strongest support. For this reason, I decided to draw a close-up depiction of hands and fingers because their extra-sensitive receptors are able to detect even the mildest and gentlest touch.

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The World on Your Platter

Prerna Lulia

11th Grade, Narsee Monjee College of Commerce & Economics
Mumbai, India

“True inclusion is when everyone is not only invited to the table, but encouraged to contribute to the meal.”

Anne Russ

New York, New York

Artist Statement: The platter contains delicacies from around the globe—from vegan to meat, healthy to junk, and spicy to sweet. Yet, all of them add a unique charm, like seven colors completing a rainbow. We all may hail from different ethnicities, cultures, races, genders, but we all, without fail, require sustenance to live. Our hunger unites us. Our primal need doesn’t question diversity. Isn’t that food for thought?
“Those with special needs don’t need the burden of your sympathy. They need a chance to show their capabilities.”

Naomi Stamps
Dacula, Georgia

Differently Abled
(Stephen Hawking)

Mubarak Muhammad Ali
Karachi, Pakistan

Artist Statement: There are many people around us who face hardships in their lives and try to recover. The term “disability” should not exist; they are differently abled. Include them and see the magic. Stephen Hawking, an English theoretical physicist, cosmologist, professor and author who died in 2018, is an excellent example of someone who motivated billions of humans to face hardships and contribute to the world.
They Are ALL Our Children

Maria Morales
Lumberton, New Jersey

“The same hand that holds a gun and starts war, can hold a pencil and start peace.”

Débora Sousa
São Paulo, Brazil

Artist Statement: This work shows the children of war and conflicts. Leaders of different countries seem so ready to initiate conflicts and the most powerless and vulnerable seem to be the ones who suffer. The children are of different nationalities from different conflicts throughout the world. This painting takes inspiration from Gustav Klimt’s “The Kiss” painting. The children are embraced and held by hands that form a heart to hold them in, incorporating Klimt’s designs and patterns from “The Kiss.” After all, as humans we should understand that they are all our children. Their diversity and uniqueness is what will make us all better and stronger. This painting is based on real photographs of children who have been involved in wars and conflicts around the world.
“There is splendor in individuality and strength in diversity.”

Cynthia Sutanto
Corpus Christi, Texas

Two Cultures, One People
Jonathan Imafidor
Atlanta, Georgia

Artist Statement: Culture becomes a visually tangible concept that depicts my ideas, imagination, feelings and experiences from my background and my travels across Nigeria and the American West. My technique borrows largely from pointillism in making use of thousands of small colored dots in creating forms against a dark background. To further strengthen my ideas, traditional Yoruba motifs/symbols are silently incorporated. These motifs provide a philosophical framework on which my works are founded. I employ acrylic on canvas and most times mix acrylic with glue to achieve my desired texture.
“Your track in life should not be determined by what side of the tracks you come from.”

Seth Morano
Sarasota, Florida

Artist Statement: In this piece, I present a poor boy scavenging for nourishment secretly. While searching in the rubbish bin, he can only get several leftovers he needs to survive, with the stench of trash always present. There will always be kids scavenging for leftovers thrown by passersby in nearby alleyways. I grew up in a poor household and I will never forget scavenging in a rubbish bin with an aching heart. Because of poverty, many irresponsible adults abandon their children, causing them to wander around urban areas in search of food. No one chooses to be born into a poor family, and many children are mistreated in school just because they are born in poverty. We need to learn consideration, acceptance and genuine respect, instead of strengthening ongoing discrimination.

Pei Shuen Liew
The One Academy
Petaling Jaya, Malaysia
Teacher: Christopher Reis

What Are You Looking For?

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Pei Shuen Liew
The One Academy
Petaling Jaya, Malaysia
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What Are You Looking For?
“Our histories brought us to where we are. Our actions today decide where we’ll go.”

Elizabeth Gaona
London, United Kingdom

Women in American History

Ms. Stein, Ms. Mundy’s 2nd Grade, Bay Haven’s Girls Change the World Club & Ms. Francis
Bay Haven School of Basics Plus & Alta Vista Elementary School
Sarasota, Florida

Artist Statement: This work was a collaboration between second grade classes at Bay Haven and Alta Vista elementary schools. We wanted to celebrate girl power and the contributions of women to American society. Each artist researched and then carefully illustrated and colored their woman’s portrait using colored pencil and graphite. The flag represents our patriotism and celebration of all people.
Don’t follow the path... Start a trail.” Ruby Bridges

“I’ll tell you what freedom is to me: No Fear.” Nina Simone

“Do one thing every day that scares you.” Eleanor Roosevelt

“Women in American History”

“When they go low, we go high.” Michelle Obama

“Until we get equality in education, we won’t have an equal society.” Sonia Sotomayor

“Like what you do, and then you will do your best.” Katherine Johnson

“Girls Rock!”
“Social Media is like a mask. Why hide behind it?”

Mackenzie Valenza
6th Grade, Pine View School
Osprey, Florida
Teacher: Fran Squires, M.Ed.

Social Media Doesn’t Capture the Reality

Jarom Su’a
8th Grade, Rowlett Middle Academy
Bradenton, Florida
Teacher: Brittany Braniger

Artist Statement: When creating my artwork, the first thing I thought of was coming together to help our world. Then I thought of all the issues that are happening today and how so many trees are being cut down every day and no one is doing anything about it. I wanted to show how social media can be fun, but it doesn’t really show what is happening in real life; it’s much more like a fantasy.
“A first impression doesn’t mean it has to be your last; everyone deserves a second chance.”

Andrea Pelizzari
8th Grade, Sarasota Middle School
Sarasota, Florida
Teacher: Susy Grandusky

They’re Just Hats

Mikele Best
8th Grade, Woodland Middle, VPA Gifted Magnet Academy
North Port, Florida
Teacher: Bruce Jenkins
they're just hats
“Let’s celebrate diversity like the biggest party of our lives.”

Vera Winship
6th Grade, Sarasota Middle School
Sarasota, Florida
Teacher: Colleen Joiner

Eggs with Legs

Azlyn Platt
12th Grade, Suncoast Polytechnical High School
Sarasota, Florida
Teacher: Amy Badovinac
“It was a beautiful sight to see strangers from all over the world call each other ‘brother’ and ‘sister’.”

Habibah Khanom
London, United Kingdom

Artist Statement: My work shows a giraffe and a baby elephant accepting each other. I wanted to show the big, tall giraffe accepting and embracing the small, short elephant. This piece is important to me because, in our world, especially in school, there are so many different people. It should be human nature to love and accept one another, no matter how they look, talk or act, and no matter their size, shape or height.

Big, Small, Short or Tall

Serafina Guirguis
8th Grade, Pine View School
Osprey, Florida
Teacher: Haley Brown
“Just because another person doesn’t see your value doesn’t mean you’re worthless.”

Bredacious Bruner
Blakely, Georgia

You look like a...

Cassandra Pulawski
9th Grade, Riverview High School
Sarasota, Florida
Teacher: Colleen Cory

Artist Statement: My artwork depicts the effects of bullying and body image. These kids have been teased, called names and labeled based on their appearances. The girl on the left hears the haunting words of others calling her too fat: “You look like an elephant!” The boy on the right, has always been called out for being too tall: “You look like a giraffe!” This is wrong and is not how we should be treating each other. Embrace who you are and stand tall! Realize that the unique qualities about you are what make you beautiful.
Submit Your Art

We invite you to participate in creating a society that is more inclusive for all. Consider submitting an original work of art and know that you are helping to create an inclusive community where differences are celebrated.

Submit Your Quote

Personal thoughts that accompany each work of art provide our community a chance to voice their thoughts and ideas on the importance of diversity and inclusion. The combination of visual art and the written word adds a deeper dimension to the overall experience.

For complete details about this juried exhibit, including available cash prizes, and to make submissions, visit us online at EmbracingOurDifferences.org

Support the Exhibit

There are many opportunities available to support the Embracing Our Differences exhibit and our education initiatives. Please consider a gift to help us create a community where differences are embraced and individuality is celebrated.

Visit EmbracingOurDifferences.org for more information and to make a donation.

Embracing Our Differences is proud of its many collaborations throughout the last year. A past recipient of The Patterson Foundation’s “Collaborative Innovator Award,” Embracing Our Differences partnered with the Asolo Rep, Boxser Diversity Initiative, Bucket Fillers, Inc., Community Foundation of Sarasota County, Easter Seals of Southwest Florida, Florida Studio Theatre, Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee, Manatee Community Foundation, Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, Mote Marine Laboratory, NewGate School, Sarasota County Bar Association, Sarasota Film Festival, Sarasota Opera, Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, The Haven, The Patterson Foundation, The Ringling, United Way Suncoast, USFSM, Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe, Booker, Riverview and North Port high schools and many others to bring innovative diversity education programming to Sarasota and Manatee students throughout the school year.
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“I Pulled at my heartstrings. It should be mandatory to visit this exhibit.”
- Sarasota Resident

I Am, Steve Fabian, page 56
Pink is for Girls, Napoleon Stewart, page 74
Comic Heroes, Ana Perić, page 40
Come Together, Ash DiCristofalo, page 38
"Really inspirational and challenging, as well as comforting, reducing isolation."

– Out-of-state Tourist
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