



EMBRACING OUR DIFFERENCES

2022 ANNUAL REPORT



WE ARE SO **MUCH BETTER** UNITED IN **KINDNESS**
THAN DIVIDED IN ANGER.

- Alicia Chalmers, Bradenton, Florida



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We are very proud of the relationships developed with our Community Partners – each of which plays an integral role in the success of our programs. Without their support, our work would be impossible.



Who We Are

Embracing Our Differences is a nonprofit organization based in Sarasota, Florida, that uses the power of art and education to expand consciousness and open the heart to celebrate the diversity of the human family. It accomplishes this through an annual, large-scale, juried art exhibition and a comprehensive series of educational initiatives, programs and resources designed for teachers and students.

Mission & 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.

Roy* & Helen McBean
Dennis & Graci McGillicuddy
* Of Blessed Memory

Letter from our Executive Director

19
YEARS

Embracing Our Differences achieved many milestones this past year—and we’re thrilled to share just a few of these top accomplishments with you.

Our annual outdoor exhibition in Sarasota’s Bayfront drew 371,256 people—more than any previous year. (That’s four million visitors since 2004!)

EOD’s exhibition also received national news recognition on the PBS NewsHour in March, as part of Charlayne Hunter-Gault’s exploration of creative solutions to racism. This segment put a national spotlight on EOD’s profound influence on developing minds and hearts, and we were deeply honored to be included.

EOD’s launch of “The Oneness of Art” offered more creative solutions. Poet and teaching artist Cedric Hameed designed this bold initiative to create community engagement and promote diversity through the power of collaborative art.

EOD’s outreach inside Sarasota and Manatee school classrooms also passed several milestones last year. Our ongoing educational initiatives touched the lives of 52,274 students - that’s 10,000 more than the year before. Our annual Reading Day in March reached nearly 9,000 students. Students, educators and volunteer readers celebrated reading and diversity through books by BIPOC, AAPI, and Hispanic and Latinx authors and illustrators. Through our ongoing partnership with the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading we distributed 9,400 books that stimulated conversations about diversity, bullying, and respect in 485 classrooms.

Our ongoing educational initiatives touched the lives of 52,274 students in 2021.

There were many other significant achievements this year, including the continuation of our college scholarship program for the third year. The ongoing commitment of Coexistence Club members to promote diversity, inclusion, respect and integrity in their schools led us to consider how we could further honor their efforts while also supporting their education after graduation. This year, three high school seniors entering college in the fall and four students already attending college received \$1,000 four-year renewable scholarships. It’s heartwarming to see second- and third-year awardees advocate for inclusion within their university communities.



These are only a few of the milestones of EOD’s journey over the past year. We went the distance, and it’s thanks to our extended family of educators, students, volunteers, dedicated board members and generous supporters. You’ve all stayed with us every step of the way. That made our journey possible.

We can’t thank you enough!

Sarah Wertheimer
Executive Director



2022 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 and inclusion." The exhibit welcomed 371,256 visitors this past year, bringing total attendance, since 2004, to more than 4,000,000.

ART & QUOTE SUBMISSIONS

This year's exhibit had an impressive response to the call for artwork and inspirational quotes, with 17,413 entries from 123 countries and 47 states. Students from 423 schools around the world submitted artwork or quotations, with more than 68% of this year's submissions coming from students.

371,256

visitors experienced the 2022 art exhibit at Bayfront Park, Sarasota.

4,071,000

visitors experienced our art exhibits since 2004.

“
**Beautiful,
inspiring art.**

**Thank you for making space
for this in our community!**

- Exhibit Visitor

“
**Thanks so much for
this food for the soul,
especially during
such an extra tender
time in the world.**

- Exhibit Visitor

17,413

2022 art and quotation submissions

123,220

submissions since 2005

2022 submissions were received from:

423 schools

47 states

123 countries

416 volunteers participated in our exhibit and educational initiatives.



EDUCATION INITIATIVES

Interactive participation is one of the most effective delivery methods for the often difficult and abstract concepts of kindness and inclusion. Our year-round education initiatives represent the most important aspect of our efforts – reaching and impacting the lives of tens of thousands of students, teachers and adults around the world annually.

Free Field Trips

Bucket Fillers Reading Day

Embracing Our Differences Reading Day

Coexistence Clubs

Student Docent Program

College Scholarships

Unity Day

Workshops for Educators and Adults

Art & Quotation Creation

Lesson Plans

Oneness of Art

Community Collaborations

Teachers who participate in our education programs overwhelmingly rate them as meaningful and relevant educational experiences for their students.

Of teachers surveyed during the 2021-2022 school year, the average rating for overall program experience was 4.8 / 5 stars.

“
Many of our students had never been to Sarasota or seen the Bayfront. It was a wonderful opportunity for kids who usually feel left out, to be made to feel so special.
-8th Grade Teacher

52,274 students participated in our education initiatives in 2022.

Free Field Trips

Tours of our annual exhibit have become a signature of our education efforts with thousands of students worldwide benefiting from in-person, live virtual and on-demand video tours this past school year. Through peer-guided conversations with high school aged docents utilizing Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) pedagogy, exhibit tours embrace kindness and inclusion while providing connections to art education and curriculum engagement through student-driven exploration.



“Being at a Title I school, your programs are so beneficial for us, and we truly appreciate the experiences you provide for our students. Thank you again for an amazing day of art that the students will never forget!”

-5th Grade Teacher



Bucket Fillers Reading Day

The Bucket Fillers' books use the concept of an invisible bucket to encourage positive behavior. Each book shows children how rewarding it is "filling buckets" through acts of kindness, appreciation and love to others. In response to school district COVID-19 protocols, this year's pre-k through third grade classroom initiative featured all on-demand video read alongs with local arts organizations and author Carol McCloud.

Thank you to our arts partners for creating engaging read along videos for participating classrooms: Asolo Rep, CreArte Latino Cultural Center, Venice Theatre, Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe.

8,210

students participated in Bucket Fillers Reading Day



"My students loved having someone read to them in our classroom. They were so delighted that they got to keep the books! We have recently been talking a lot about our differences - how we look, think, feel, act, speak, etc., so it was awesome to see my students make connections from this book to prior learning—lots of 'AH-HA' moments."

-2nd Grade Teacher

2 81 455 8,665

counties

schools / centers

classrooms

books donated

"The children loved the concept of bucket fillers. I heard them talking about it on the playground after our story time. This will definitely stick with them."

- 1st Grade Teacher

"The teacher I visited was super enthusiastic about the EOD program. I was treated as a welcomed guest. The children were attentive, very polite and engaged with the story."

- Volunteer Reader



Embracing Our Differences Reading Day

In partnership with the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, EOD Reading Day engages pre-k through third grade students in stories of inclusion and belonging through diverse authored and illustrated books. In response to COVID-19, teachers selected either in-person volunteer readers or an on-demand video read along. All were given the opportunity to continue exploring their assigned title via on-demand classroom activity videos.

8,915

students participated in EOD Reading Day

"When my class saw the logo for Embracing Our Differences one student shouted, 'YAY! We are getting a book!' They were very quiet listening to the story and were even more excited to have their own copy to take home."

-3rd Grade Teacher

9,399 484 121 79 2

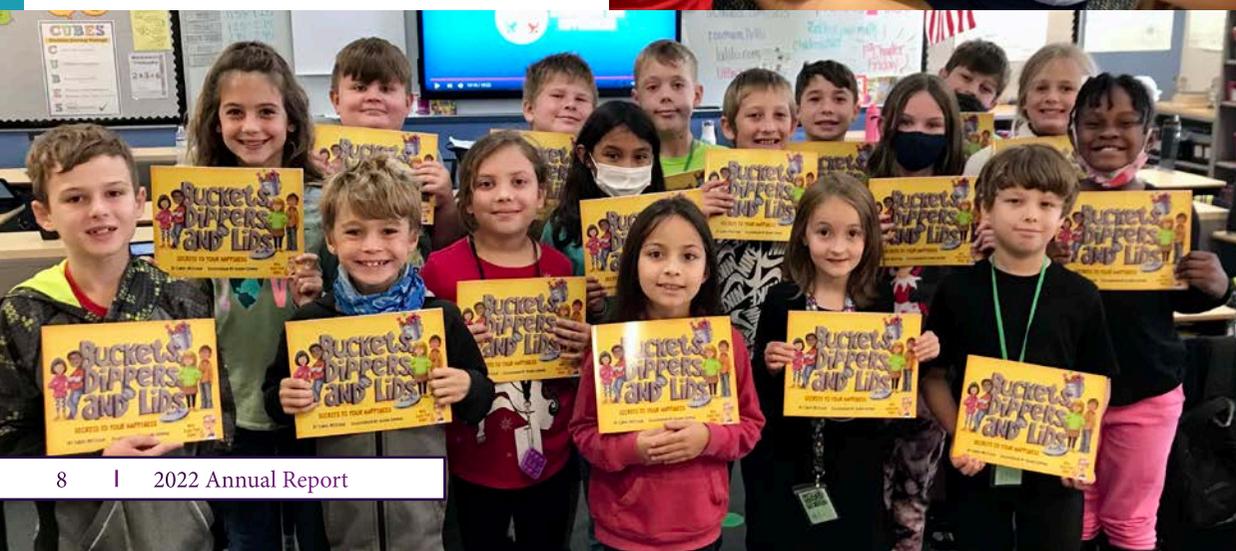
books donated

classrooms

volunteers

schools / centers

counties



Coexistence Clubs

Coexistence Clubs are a student-driven middle and high school component of Embracing Our Differences' education initiative. While working within their respective schools and the local community, these dynamic students promote Embracing Our Differences' vision of creating a world that embraces diversity, respects differences and actively rejects hatred and prejudice, by helping to make their schools a safer and more inclusive environment for everyone. During the 2021 - 2022 school year, we maintained active Coexistence Clubs at Booker, IMG Academy, North Port, Riverview, Sarasota, Suncoast Polytech, and Venice High Schools, as well as Laurel Nokomis School, Pine View School, SCF Collegiate School at both the Bradenton and Venice campuses, and Venice Middle School.



12

coexistence clubs

165

high school docents

12,468

students benefited from docent-led tours

340

club members

Student Docent Program

Under the guidance of Coexistence Club faculty advisor and docent coordinator, Dena Sturm, local high school students serve as guides for thousands of area elementary, middle and high school students who visit the exhibit every year—inspiring the younger students to more fully comprehend the messages delivered through the art and quotes through the use of Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS). With their guided questions and planted seeds of inquiry, docents help younger students arrive at realizations of their own about diversity and acceptance.

EOD College Scholarships

For the third year, we were able to offer college scholarships to high school seniors who serve as members of their schools' Coexistence Clubs. These \$1,000 renewable scholarships were awarded to Megan Meese and Anela Ajkic of Riverview High School and Mya Fraser of Venice High School. They join Emilia Przepiora, a rising sophomore at the University of Florida, Kennedy Hart, a rising sophomore at Rice University, and Chloe Labrecque and Cam Pham, rising juniors at the University of Florida.

“Our docent was very professional, patient, kind, and understanding of my students. He was very helpful in guiding my students to develop their thoughts about a particular picture and encouraging them to try to express what they thought the picture was conveying.”

- 8th Grade Teacher



Unity Day

Under the direction of a trained facilitator and school guidance counselors, cohorts of 60 to 80 students at each high school participated in a powerful day of team-building exercises that encourage compassion and empathy while fostering inclusive school environments.

8

schools

51

teachers

674

students

Workshops for Educators and Adults

Art Intensive

The 2022 Art Intensive brought together 50 visual arts teachers for an in-person experience at the Sarasota Art Museum (SAM). Featuring sessions from local artists and scholars, participants engaged in powerful presentations and interactive lessons geared toward inspiring and reinvigorating teaching practices. Collectively, this year's participants are responsible for more than 15,000 students in Charlotte, Manatee and Sarasota counties.

Inclusion and Belonging Adult Seminars

Our vision of a world that embraces diversity, respects differences and actively rejects hatred and prejudice extends beyond pre-k through 12th grade student communities. Over the past year, EOD has provided interactive training sessions for Northwestern Mutual St. Louis and Siemens Mobility, in addition to Sarasota County Schools and School District of Manatee County educators, guidance counselors and administrators.

Education Ambassador Program

The 24 members of the Education Ambassador Program 2021/2022 cohort represented 22 schools and over 4,800 students from Manatee and Sarasota counties. Through ten hours of professional development workshops and the creation of EOD-inspired projects with their students, each worked toward creating more inclusive and respectful school cultures while highlighting EOD's core values of diversity, inclusion, respect and integrity.

Art and Quotation Creation

Each fall, thousands of students in Sarasota and Manatee counties spend time creating art and quotations for submission to our annual exhibition. Each student benefits by engaging in a comprehensive approach to critical thinking and visual inquiry that provides a safe and healthy means of clarifying their own identities. It also helps them develop an enhanced sense of self-esteem and social skills. Developing new and different perspectives from their peers is an added bonus.

“The ambassador program provided me with the inspiration and support I needed to continue broadening my students’ perspectives with diversity and embracing their identities through inclusion.”

- 10th Grade Teacher



Lesson Plans

Interactive student participation is one of the most effective delivery methods for the often difficult and abstract concepts of diversity and inclusion. Prepared under the supervision of curriculum development specialists from the Sarasota County School District, the age-appropriate lesson plans identify the relevant curriculum standards, educational objectives, instructional strategies and assessment guidelines.

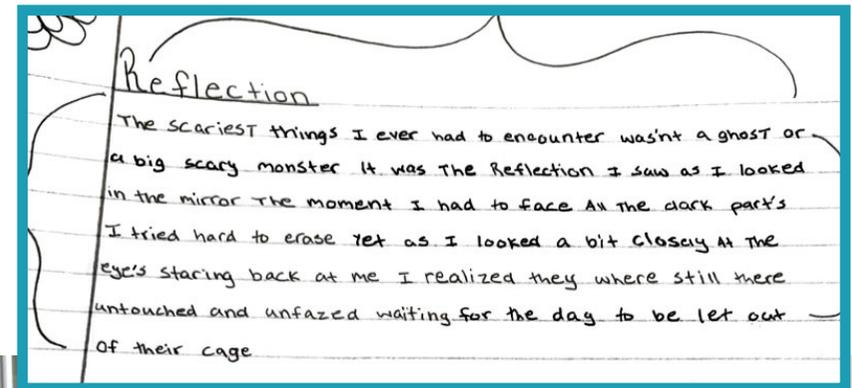
“Thank you so much for the wonderful lesson plans and content you provide. This was my first year teaching, and I came across EOD at the end of our school year. I am hopeful we can use many more of the lessons next year!”

- 4th Grade Teacher

Oneness of Art

Poetry has always been a source of growth and enlightenment for teaching artist Cedric Hameed, and the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the longstanding need to create a space of articulation and strength for all to promote mental health and well-being. The Oneness of Art engaged community members of all ages in interactive workshops culminating in a celebration of featured artwork inspired by participants and created by local artists of all mediums in addition to a 30-minute documentary film.

Initiative Sponsors





Community Collaborations

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 ALSO Youth, Asolo Rep, Boxser Diversity Initiative, Boys and Girls Club of Manatee County, Boys and Girls Club of Sarasota and DeSoto Counties, Bucket Fillers, Inc., Community Foundation of Sarasota County, CreArte Latino Cultural Center, Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County, Early Learning Coalition of Sarasota County, Easterseals of Southwest Florida, Ed Smith Stadium, Florida Studio Theatre, The Hermitage Artist Retreat, Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee, MagnifyGood, Manatee Arts Education Council, Manatee Community Foundation, Manatee Education Foundation, Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, Mote Marine Laboratory, Nathan Benderson Park, New College of Florida, NewGate School, Ringling College of Art and Design, SaraSolo Productions, Sarasota Art Museum, Second Heart Homes, Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, The Florida Holocaust Museum, The Patterson Foundation, The Ringling Museum, United Way Suncoast, Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, Venice Theatre, Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe, and many others to bring innovative diversity education programming to Manatee and Sarasota students during the 2021-2022 school year.

OUR SPONSORS

Presenting Sponsors



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EMBRACING OUR DIFFERENCES

The 20th Annual Outdoor Exhibit

Celebrating Diversity and Inclusion

ON DISPLAY IN 2023

January 18 – March 12

SARASOTA'S BAYFRONT PARK

March 22 – April 19

NORTH PORT'S BUTLER PARK

April 26 – May 29

STATE COLLEGE OF FLORIDA BRADENTON CAMPUS

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Embracing Our Differences

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