



## **Diversity exhibit to offer training to teachers**

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Since 2004, the Embracing Our Differences' international outdoor art exhibit has showcased the work of artists and writers from all walks of life.

Submissions of art and quotes by 39 local students were included in the juried exhibit last spring. Organizers said that success can be attributed, in part, to area teachers participating in workshops to learn the skills needed to help their students create meaningful art and quotes eligible for submission to the exhibition.

Two of the workshops, *Writing About Diversity* and the *Art Teacher Retreat*, will be offered from Oct. 1 to 4.

"Since 2004, more than 500 teachers have participated in our workshops, which represent one of the most important aspects of our efforts — to positively impact the lives of regional students," Michael Shelton, executive director of Embracing Our Differences, said. "Not only do the children explore effective ways to tap into their creativity; they also experience new ways to learn and succeed in the world."

For this year's workshops, Embracing Our Differences is again collaborating with the Partners in Education Program of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts as well as with Florida Studio Theatre, YEA Arts (Youth Experiencing Art) and Ringling College of Art and Design.

Under the guidance of Amy MacDonald, an educator with the Kennedy Center program, *Writing About Diversity* is designed to increase teacher and student participation in the exhibit's creative writing curriculum and quotation competition. Presented in partnership with the Sarasota County school district, YEA Arts and Florida Studio Theatre, the workshop takes the topic of diversity and tolerance and helps students express and create a short, powerful quote on the subject.

The evening workshops will be Oct. 1, 2 and 3 at three locations in Sarasota and Manatee counties. The writing workshops are also broadcast live on the school district's SAFARI Montage system for teachers who are not able to attend in person. Visits by MacDonald

and Florida Studio Theatre staff members to area schools also will be broadcast into other classrooms.

The Art Teacher Retreat, in partnership with the Ringling College of Art and Design, is a two-day retreat intended to reinvigorate educators' teaching practices while inspiring their art and art integration skills. About 30 area teachers will be at Ringling College on Oct. 3 and 4.

"With more than 25,000 students participating in 2013, Embracing Our Differences continues to be one of the largest education programs in Southwest Florida," Shelton said. "The resources we provide to our teachers are a top priority for us."

Embracing Our Differences' annual juried international art exhibit returns to Island Park in Sarasota and Riverwalk in Bradenton from March 30 to June 2 and to North Port High School from May 2 to June 2.

Amateurs, professionals and students can enter artwork and quotations until Jan. 6. For more information and application forms, visit [www.embracingourdifferences.org](http://www.embracingourdifferences.org).