

MEDIA CONTACTS

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6th Annual Embracing Dr. Seuss' Differences Day is March 1!

More than 6,000 students from 45 elementary schools in Sarasota and Manatee counties will celebrate reading and diversity on the 115th birthday of Dr. Seuss.

Embracing Our Differences is partnering with the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading to distribute 6,500 books and stimulate conversations about diversity, bullying, and respect in 360 classrooms.

(Sarasota-Manatee, FL) More than 6,000 elementary school students from 45 schools in Sarasota and Manatee counties will celebrate reading and diversity on March 1, the 115th birthday of Dr. Seuss. Embracing Dr. Seuss' Differences Day is the brainchild of Embracing Our Differences, a local non-profit organization that created the event six years ago as part of its ongoing educational initiatives. For the fourth year in a row, the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading is participating through funding from The Patterson Foundation, the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, United Way Suncoast and an anonymous family foundation.

According to Brenna Wilhm, director of operations for Embracing Our Differences, readings are scheduled for more than 360 pre-Kindergarten to third-grade classrooms in 45 schools across Sarasota and Manatee counties. To date, 280 volunteers from the community have signed up to be readers. Over the course of the day, more than 6,500 books, focused on the theme of diversity and inclusion, will be gifted to every participating student and classroom. The books are courtesy of

Embracing Our Differences and the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, with support from the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, The Patterson Foundation, United Way Suncoast and an anonymous family foundation.

"Dr. Seuss epitomizes a love of children and learning," says Wilhm. "His use of rhyme is an effective tool for teaching young children about the joys of reading and language. When we celebrate Dr. Seuss and reading, we send a clear message to our children that reading is fun and important." She adds that the books selected for this year's readings are designed to stimulate conversations regarding diversity, bullying, character education and respect for others.

The books selected for the school readings are:

- Pre-K: **My Many-Colored Days**. Using a spectrum of vibrant colors and a menagerie of animals, this unique book is a wonderful way to talk with children about their feelings.
- Kindergarten: **The Cat in the Hat**. The children learn how to be "upstanders" against the Cat and his scheming tricks.
- First Grade: **Green Eggs and Ham**. All about trying new things when those things seem strange and unappealing.
- Second Grade: **Horton Hears a Who**. After hearing a cry for help, Horton vows to protect the Whos.
- Third Grade: **The Lorax**: Seuss pleads for the planet.

Since 2004, downtown Sarasota's Bayfront Park has been the backdrop for Embracing Our Differences' colorful, larger-than-life canvases integrating powerful imagery and thought-provoking messages celebrating diversity. The scale and impact

of this outdoor exhibition has continued to grow, attracting over two million visitors since its inception. **The 16th anniversary exhibit continues through March 15.** For more information about *Embracing Our Differences*, call 941-404-5710 or visit www.embracingourdifferences.org.

About Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading

The Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading is a communitywide effort in Manatee and Sarasota counties to help all children, especially those from low-income families, succeed in school and life by ensuring they read on grade level by the end of third grade. For more information, please visit www.gradelevelreadingsuncoast.net.

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.

Photo captions:

- *Volunteer Nick Owens enjoys reading “The Cat in the Hat” to enthusiastic kindergarteners at Blackburn Elementary School at the 2017 Embracing Dr. Seuss Day.*