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Embracing Our Differences Appoints New Board Chair, Officer, and Student Member

Judge Charles E. Williams assumes role of chairman of the board of directors and Linda Poteat-Brown as vice-chair. EOD also welcomes a STAR student board member, Nicolas Palacio.

(December 2, 2021) Sarah Wertheimer, executive director of Embracing Our Differences, announced recently that the organization has appointed the Honorable Judge Charles E. Williams as chair of its board of directors. In other board news, Linda Poteat-Brown was appointed vice-chair of the board and Nicolas Palacio joins as a STAR student board member.

“I’m honored to accept this role as EOD moves into its 19th year as one of the area’s leading arts and education organizations,” says Williams. “The last two years have been years of firsts—despite the great challenges we’ve all faced. Our popular annual exhibit became a movable feast when we brought it to Nathan Benderson Park this past summer. We also created a mini display of six banners from our 2021 exhibit at Ed Smith Stadium. Another first? EOD recently launched ‘The Oneness of Art,’ a powerful yearlong initiative created by the noted poet and teaching artist Cedric Hameed to unite the community through the power of creative expression. We were also able to revitalize the Education Ambassador initiative, a year-long program that empowered 25 teachers across the tri-county region to carry messages

of diversity, inclusion, respect, and integrity into their schools in innovative ways. The teachers participated in professional development workshops led by teaching artists and presenters from around the country. Each teacher worked with their students to create original, EOD-inspired projects centered on community-building activities that inspired cooperation, communication, and empathy. In the classroom and under the sky, we continued to promote inclusion, respect, and kindness throughout the area.”

“All of this is made possible through the efforts of a formidable group of artists, educators, students, volunteers, and supporters who so fiercely share our commitment to celebrate the values of the human family both locally and globally,” says Williams. “And we never forget where our vision began—with EOD’s brilliant co-founders Graci and Dennis McGillicuddy. It’s their passion to inspire change for good, to honor the amazing spectrum of human potential, and to celebrate the differences that make each individual precious and irreplaceable, that continues to empower and inspire this organization.”

Judge Charles E. Williams is a Circuit Court judge in the 12th Judicial Circuit, which includes Sarasota, Manatee and DeSoto counties. He graduated from Howard University and the University of Florida College of Law. After a career in the state attorney and public defender’s offices he went into private law practice. While he was in private practice, he was selected by then Gov. Lawton Chiles to be appointed a Circuit Court judge for the 12th Judicial Circuit. Williams is a recipient of the Sarasota County NAACP Public Service Award and the Sarasota County Branch NAACP’s Lifetime Achievement Award. He is also the recipient of the C.L. McKaig

Award, presented by the Sarasota County Bar Association in recognition and appreciation of his tireless dedication to promoting the ideals of equality, justice, and professionalism. Williams also writes, directs, and produces documentary films. His film *Through The Tunnel* won Best Historical Documentary at the DocMiami International Film Festival. He received the 2015 Sidney Poitier Family Award for his work on the film *Newtown at 100*, and for promoting diversity in film. Williams currently serves on the boards of Embracing Our Differences, Florida Studio Theatre, The Boxser Diversity Initiative, and The Community Foundation of Sarasota County. He is a founding member of the Sarasota County Bar Association Council for Diversity and Inclusion. Williams works closely with the Booker High School Law Academy in hopes of inspiring a future generation of lawyers and leaders who understand and respect the role the law has played in shaping our society.

Linda Poteat-Brown is the daughter of one of EOD's founding members, Carol Poteat-Buchanan, who passed away in 2018. Poteat-Brown is the vice president of human resources at Easter Seals Southwest Florida and has nearly four decades of experience in the areas of marketing, event planning and human resources. She says she believes involvement is the only way to make change happen and has seen the successes achieved "when one gives freely of his or her time and talent. I watched my mother, over the course of her life, serve as a philanthropist, supporter and volunteer for many important issues, including women's rights, politics, arts and education and much more." Poteat-Brown co-founded and served as president of the Georgia chapter of the US National Committee for UN Women for 10 years and the chapter president representative for

the National Board of Directors of UN Women from 2007 to 2011. A graduate of the Sarasota Chamber of Commerce Leadership Sarasota class of 2018, Poteat-Brown is also a member of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and DOVIA – Directors of Volunteers in Agencies. She has worked for both nonprofit and for-profit companies including Philip Morris, Avon and Bloomingdales. Before moving to Sarasota in 2014, Poteat-Brown worked in the human resources department at Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta for 14 years.

Nicolas Palacio, an 11th-grade student at Riverview High School, is a member of The Boys & Girls Club's STAR (Students Take Active Roles) Leadership Training program. He has been part of the Coexistence Club at Riverview since 2019 and is currently serving as an officer in the club. In addition to his work with Embracing Our Differences, Nicolas volunteers at Marie Selby Botanical Gardens and The Boys & Girls Club of Sarasota. He is also a varsity soccer player and an active member of Riverview's Spanish honors society and IB program.

Embracing Our Differences' board of directors includes Judge Charles E. Williams, Chair; Linda Poteat-Brown, Vice-Chair; Kaitlin Yelle, Treasurer; Richard Bergman, Secretary; and Christina de Guia, M.D., Nicolas Palacio, John Weber, and Sarah Wertheimer.

For more information about Embracing Our Differences, please call 941-404-5710 or visit 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.**