

MEDIA CONTACTS

Sarah Wertheimer ▪ 941-404-5710 ▪ sarah@embracingourdifferences.org

Su Byron ▪ 941-726-8468 ▪ subyron@verizon.net

Embracing Our Differences Presents the Pilot Year of “Oneness of Art”

Cedric Hameed, the noted teaching artist and poet, has created a powerful, yearlong initiative that creates in-depth community engagement and collaboration through the power of artistic expression.

(October 20, 2021) Embracing Our Differences (EOD) is presenting the launch of “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. The project’s initial phase, which began in September, will engage community members in interactive poetry workshops. Local visual artists and performers will then take inspiration from the words of workshop participants to create original art across a wide range of mediums, including visual art, music and dance. The initiative will culminate in a community-wide celebration of this creative collaboration.

“EOD’s commitment to using art as a catalyst to create awareness and promote diversity has grown beyond our annual outdoor exhibit at Sarasota’s Bayfront Park,” says Sarah Wertheimer, EOD’s executive director. “Over the past seven years, we’ve sought new, out-of-the-box ways to unite and engage the community. When Cedric approached us with this concept, we were immediately drawn to it and knew it was a great fit for our organization and our mission.”

According to Wertheimer, the project creates in-depth community engagement through the power of artistic expression.

“Historically, art has always been a powerful, unifying force in the places people live,” she says. “Communities traditionally come together around the stories they tell, and songs and celebrations in the public square. The Oneness of Art initiative will reinvent that tradition in our 21st-century community.” She notes that this shared expression is needed now more than ever. “The pandemic has isolated and atomized us,” says Wertheimer. “Artistic expression brings us together — and affirms that we’re all in this together — and we’re not alone. The knowledge of that shared experience has a powerful healing effect on body, mind and soul.”

Wertheimer explains that the project has three distinct phases. For the next four months, Hameed is holding 16 workshops reaching out to a broad section of the community. Participants have been selected from the Boys & Girls Clubs of Manatee County, the Boys & Girls Clubs of Sarasota and DeSoto counties, Easterseals Southwest Florida Academy, and Second Heart Homes. During each workshop session, Hameed guides participants in the creation of poetry revolving around themes of self-image, self-esteem, fear and triumph. In the project’s second phase, which starts in January 2022, Hameed will share these poems with commissioned artists and performers from Ringling College of Art and Design and others across the region. During this period, these artists will take inspiration from the poetry to create original visual art and performance pieces. At the project’s conclusion, their work will be displayed and performed at various area locations, including museums, public spaces, and partner organization facilities.

According to Hameed, this ambitious project has a simple goal. “We want to start a conversation,” he says. “The hardest conversation is the one you don’t have. Once

people start talking and communicating, that changes. People find their unique voice — and then they find their power.”

Filmmaker Nate Ilardi will document the Oneness of Art initiative from beginning to end. Sponsors include the joint COVID-19 Response Initiative of Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation and Gulf Coast Community Foundation, Community Foundation of Sarasota County, Education Foundation of Sarasota County, Manatee Community Foundation, United Way Suncoast, MagnifyGood, Bookstore1Sarasota, an anonymous family foundation, and many Embracing Our Differences supporters.

“The Oneness of Art has only just begun,” notes Wertheimer. “There’ll be many more opportunities for supporters across the community to contribute to this amazing initiative in the future.”

To learn more about getting involved, email

Ben@EmbracingOurDifferences.org or call 941-404-5710 or visit

<https://www.embracingourdifferences.org/oneness>.

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, juried, outdoor art exhibition and a comprehensive series of educational initiatives, programs and resources designed for teachers and students. Visit www.embracingourdifferences.org.