

TAMPA BAY NEWSWIRE

Embracing Our Differences Receives Grant from Macy's

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The \$5,000 grant will help fund the cost of EOD's eight Coexistence Clubs at six local high schools and two middle schools.

(July 21, 2021) Macy's recently awarded Embracing Our Differences (EOD) a \$5,000 grant to help fund the costs of EOD's eight Coexistence Clubs at six area high schools and two middle schools. The funds will be used for student docent training, diversity workshops for the faculty advisors, curriculum development for club activities, and materials and resources for the students and teachers. Coexistence Clubs are the high school component of EOD's education initiatives, with more than 290 high school students participating during the past school year.

"We are so proud of the dynamic high school students who participate in Coexistence Clubs," says Sarah Wertheimer, executive director of EOD. "They help make their schools a safer and more inclusive environment for everyone by actively engaging EOD's vision of creating a world that embraces diversity, respects differences and

actively rejects hatred and prejudice. We're so grateful to Macy's for its generous support of this initiative—and for their solidarity for our core mission.”

The first Coexistence Club was formed in 2007 by members of the Riverview High School International Baccalaureate (IB) Program and immediately became the school's largest student organization. Under the guidance of docent coordinator Dena Sturm and other faculty advisors, Coexistence Club members serve as docents during EOD's annual exhibit, leading groups of younger students through the exhibit while inspiring them to recognize and understand the messages delivered through the art and quotations. These enterprising student docents make a profound impact on the young people who visit the exhibit. With their guided questions and planted seeds of inquiry, docents help younger students arrive at realizations of their own about diversity and acceptance.

Area schools with Coexistence Clubs include Riverview High, Booker High, Sarasota High, North Port High, Venice High, IMG Academy, Laurel Nokomis School and Venice Middle School.

Embracing Our Differences' year-round education initiatives represent the most important aspect of its efforts—reaching and impacting the lives of thousands of area students and teachers. Since 2004, more than 477,000 students have participated, including 41,585 students during the 2020-2021 school year alone. Its annual, large-scale outdoor art exhibit, celebrating the theme of “enriching lives through diversity and inclusion,” showcases the art and words of thousands of artists and writers from around the world, including hundreds of area-based students and educators. The 2022 exhibit will run January 15 through April 10 at Bayfront Park in downtown Sarasota.

For more information about Embracing Our Differences, call 941-404-5710, or visit www.embracingourdifferences.org.

Photo captions:

- *Embracing Our Differences' docent coordinator and Coexistence Riverview club adviser Dena Sturm with JP.*
- *Coexistence Club members who are Embracing Our Differences' docents*

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.