



Herald-Tribune
media group

VIN'S PEOPLE: Parrish 9th-grader wins Embracing Our Differences art competition

Vin Mannix



Bravo to Parrish Community High's **Mia Gonzalez**, who won Best in Show" in a global art competition held by Embracing Our Differences, a Sarasota nonprofit that utilizes art and education to celebrate diversity in the human family.

The ninth-grader's accomplishment was impressive considering the vast field of young artists.

The contest drew nearly 17,500 entries from 123 countries, but just 50 submissions were chosen for the EOD exhibition – and there was only one Best in Show winner.

That was Mia's "Cultural Buffet," a remarkable painting that depicts two women, one Japanese, the other African, both in ethnic dress, enjoying delectable food dishes from each other's country.

One is okonomiyaki, a savory Japanese pancake with toppings such as meat, seafood and vegetables. The other is koeksisters, a traditional South African pastry made of fried dough and submersed in syrup or honey.

Mia's vision was inspired, using a black and white background and a colorful, vibrant foreground.

"I decided to incorporate food, an artwork often used to distinguish one region from others, and I spent some time researching special dishes that are prominent in each culture," she explained. "To display inclusion, I wanted to portray each person indulging in a meal from the other's culture, to respect and learn from one another.

"I believe that diversity and inclusion means being able to appreciate other cultures and lifestyles. It means sharing a piece of your life in hopes of enriching another's."

Mia was also awarded \$1,000 for her winning artwork.

Vin's People runs Sundays. Email Vin Mannix at vinspeople@gmail.com Or call 941-962-5944. Twitter: @vinmannix.