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“Embracing Kindness”

Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation

Awards Matching Grant to Bolster Embracing Our Differences’

Regional Educational Initiatives

The \$100,000 grant will help fund education programming to serve more teachers and students in Sarasota and Manatee County schools and hire additional staff to support these projects.

(Sarasota, FL; November 1, 2022) – Celebrating its 20th anniversary, Embracing Our Differences (EOD) is seeing a boost to its education programming, allowing it to serve more teachers and students in Sarasota and Manatee County schools and to hire additional staff to support its projects.

Part of that growth is thanks to a recent \$100,000 matching grant from the Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation.

While Embracing Our Differences is best known for its annual international art exhibition in Sarasota’s Bayfront Park, the organization’s year-round education initiatives include professional development opportunities for educators, reading days, unity days, and other learning programs and events. Since 2004, more than 529,000 students have participated in these programs, including 52,274 students and 1,808 teachers during the 2021-2022 school year alone.

“Embracing Our Differences has brought the world to our doorstep with a common message of love and acceptance for all,” said Teri A Hansen, the foundation’s president and CEO. “It’s really quite amazing that no matter what country the artist of quote comes from, the message of love for humanity resonates across the globe. It gives me hope for the future.”

“Some of our best work happens inside school classrooms across Sarasota and Manatee counties,” says Sarah Wertheimer, EOD’s executive director. “Our ongoing educational initiatives touched 10,000 more students last year than the year before. Teachers who participate in these programs overwhelmingly rate them as meaningful and relevant educational experiences for their students. We’re able to achieve major milestones like this through the consistent support of Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation. They’ve stood with us through every step of our journey and share our belief in the astonishing potential of the human family. We remain deeply grateful to them.”

Werthimer adds that EOD will employ “impactful communication and marketing to strategically use the Barancik match funding to attract new donors, re-engage past donors, and encourage corporate giving. With the support of our challenge match committee members, we are optimistic we will achieve and exceed the match prior to the end of our fiscal year on June 30, 2023.”

Wertheimer explains that EOD’s 20th anniversary theme is “Embracing Kindness.”

“We invite the community to join us in creating a world where kindness, respect and individuality are valued,” she says. **Those interested in participating in the challenge can visit embracingourdifferences.org/donate.**

For 20 years, Embracing Our Differences has drawn on the passion and perception of artists, students, writers, and others to create powerful statements of diversity and acceptance in its annual outdoor public art exhibition consisting of 50 billboard-sized works of art and accompanying quotes. The scale and impact of this outdoor exhibition has continued to grow, attracting more than 4 million visitors since its inception. This exhibit is the heart of a year-round program of activities designed to use art as a catalyst to create awareness and promote diversity. **Next year’s Bayfront Park exhibit runs January 18-March 12, 2023. In addition, for the first time, the exhibit will also be displayed at Butler Park in North Port, March 22-April 19, 2023; and at State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota, April 26-May 29, 2023. Other events, in celebration of EOD’s 20th anniversary, will be announced soon.**

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

Photo Captions:

- *Embracing Our Differences_ Unity Day student teachers_ Shirley Porlles, Lake Eastep and Malissa Maurice_ Courtesy photo.*
- *Embracing Our Differences_Arts Intensive presenter Orlando-based artist and educator JJ Gonzalez Acosta_ Courtesy photo.*
- *Embracing Our Differences_Exhibit field trip with students at Bayfront Park in Sarasota_ Photo by Barbara Banks*

About Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation

The Charles and Margery Barancik family has long believed in the power of philanthropy to shape our world and enrich the lives of all people. It was the expression of this belief that led them in 2014 to establish the Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation—a private, family foundation located in Sarasota, Florida. The Barancik Foundation creates initiatives and awards grants in Sarasota and beyond in the areas of education, humanitarian causes, arts and culture, the environment, and medical research. Visit barancikfoundation.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.