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Embracing Our Differences Appoints New Student Board Member

Ethan Messier, a 12th-grade student at Pine View School, is a member of The Boys & Girls Club's STAR (Students Take Active Roles) Leadership Training program.

(December 21, 2021) Sarah Wertheimer, executive director of Embracing Our Differences (EOD), announced recently that the organization has appointed Ethan Messier as a STAR student board member. Messier, a 12th-grade student at Pine View School, is a member of The Boys & Girls Club's STAR (Students Take Active Roles) Leadership Training program. After completion of the program, students are eligible to give back to a cause they care about by serving as a voting board member for one of STAR's 90 partner agencies.

Messier, 17, has been part of EOD's Coexistence Club at Pine View since 2021 and has led four Unity Day events at the school. In addition to his work with Embracing Our Differences, Messier has volunteered for dozens of community and school initiatives, including reviewing books and creating a video for youth programs at Shannon Staub Public Library in North Port; serving as a teacher's assistant at Charlotte Preparatory School in Port Charlotte; helping promote events and fundraise for BuildOn in Osprey; and volunteering for Active Minds, a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting mental health, especially among young adults. He is also active in many Pine View clubs, including the Science National Honor

Society, HOSA Future Health Professionals, and Sarasota Students 4 Climate. In addition, Messier completed a program on racism and capitalism in American history at the Harvard University Pre-College Program (July 2021) and, as part of the Perlman Price Young Entrepreneurs Program, created a business plan for StickUp, a sticker business that encourages civic engagement and nonprofit giving.

“When I had the opportunity to join EOD’s board of directors, it was a no-brainer,” says Messier. “EOD genuinely believes in amplifying the voices of young people and uplifting kids in a world where it is needed more than ever. I believe in the mission of this organization, and I’m grateful for the opportunities both the Boys and Girls Club and Embracing our Differences have given me. I can’t wait to further my involvement with this incredible community of dedicated individuals!”

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., John Weber, Ethan Messier, and Sarah Wertheimer.

STAR Leadership Training is a nationally recognized leadership program for high school students that encourages lifelong active citizenship. During this comprehensive 10-week program, teens learn how they can participate in creating the world in which they want to live through leadership skill development, meetings with our community’s elected government and school board officials, service projects and more. After completing the program, teens earn credit hours with Sarasota County Schools and volunteer hours for the Bright Futures Program. Graduates of

STAR are also eligible to give back to a cause they care about by serving as a voting board member for one of STAR's 90 partner agencies.

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.**