

# SIESTA \* SAND

Siesta Key's #1 Information Source

## Blue Sky, Blue Eye, Blue Tears

For 20 years *Embracing Our Differences* has been gracing Bayfront Park on beautiful Sarasota Bay – making it more meaningful and thus more beautiful. A total of 124 artists submitted artwork for the first show, in 2004. The first 48 paintings shown were by children from around the world and were coupled with statements by famous writers and statesmen – Fyodor Dostoyevsky, the Bible, Nelson Mandela, Albert Einstein, etc. – and were all about coexistence. The very next year, both the paintings and the thoughts to which they related were mostly by children.



Things have gotten bigger over the years. For this year's show there were close to 14,000 submissions from 119 countries, 48 states, and 424 different schools. In 2022, more than 370,000 visitors viewed these billboard-size statements of caring and inclusion. What do all these numbers mean? That people do care – about other people.

A few samples from past years, and this year, are:

2007 “The world is a library. It is only as good as the VARIETY of books on its shelves. No one wants to visit a library with only one book.” – Sarasota, sixth grade.

2008 “If you see discrimination and say nothing, what are you saying?” – Sarasota County School Board member.

2009 “Blowing out my candle doesn't make yours SHINE any brighter.” – Sarasota, seventh grade.

2009 “Our skin is just an envelope. WE are the letter” – Bradenton, 11th grade.

2014 “Although WORDS are merely sound waves, they can hurt more than any solid object.” – Osprey, sixth grade.

2018 “I like me but I’m glad everyone isn’t like me.” – St. Petersburg, kindergarten student.

2023 “We have to stop saying we are OK when we’re not OK. OK?” – Columbus, Ohio.

It is interesting that these sayings, illustrating the giant paintings, that have come down to us during the last 20 years are (mostly) by children. Written by children! Are they the adults in the room? Someone once said, “And a little child shall lead them.”

When you visit this exhibit (good parking is available) that runs through March 12, you will probably notice the blue sky, green grass, sparkling water, slight breezes, friendly faces, bobbing boats, shady trees, and other good stuff. Enjoy them all as you read, and internalize, the wisdom of the young ones. More info at [Embracingourdifferences.org](https://embracingourdifferences.org).