

## MEDIA CONTACTS

Sarah Wertheimer ▪ 941-404-5710 ▪ sarah@embracingourdifferences.org

Su Byron ▪ 941-726-8468 ▪ su@subyronenterprises.com

## **Embracing Our Differences Announces 2025 Outdoor Art Exhibitions and Top Winners**

**January 19-April 13 in Bayfront Park, Sarasota**

**Grand Opening Event is January 19**

**March 1-31 in Poynter Park, St. Petersburg**

**Community Celebration Event is March 8**

*The organization received more than 10,000 entries from 122 countries and 46 states for the 22nd annual outdoor art exhibition celebrating acceptance and respect. The Best-in-Show Adult Artwork Award went to Amanda Marie from Connecticut. Junho Chung, an 11th grader from South Korea, received the Best-in-Show Student Artwork Award. The Best-in-Show Adult Quotation Award went to Kim Howard from Indiana. Aashna Parsa, a 7<sup>th</sup> grade student from California received Best-in-Show Student Quotation Award for her inspirational message.*

(December 7, 2024) For 21 years, Embracing Our Differences has delighted viewers with its annual outdoor display of 50 billboard-sized works of art and accompanying quotes. This high-profile art exhibition draws on the passion and perception of artists, students, and writers, to create powerful visual works and written statements of inclusion, kindness and respect. The scale and impact of this open-air art show has continued to grow, attracting more than 4.8 million visitors since its inception.

Embracing Our Differences' 2025 exhibitions run January 19-April 13, 2025, in Bayfront Park, Sarasota; and March 1-March 31, 2025, in Poynter Park, St. Petersburg.

Sarasota's opening event is January 19, noon-3 p.m., at Bayfront Park in downtown Sarasota. The event will feature live music performances, interactive family friendly activities and displays by area nonprofits.

Sarah Wertheimer, President & CEO of Embracing Our Differences, says that that this year's response to the call for artwork and inspirational quotations was strong with 10,000 entries pouring in from 122 countries and 46 states. Students from 511 schools around the world submitted artwork or quotations to the juried exhibit. Awards for artwork are given for "Best-in-Show Adult," "Best-in-Show Student," and "People's Choice" categories, with the last chosen by visitors to the exhibit. Adult art winners each receive \$2,000; students receive \$2,000, which they split with their school's art program. Awards are also given for inspirational quotations. Adult quote winners each receive \$2,000; students receive \$2,000, which they split with their school's Language Arts programs. ***To see all the works in the 2025 exhibit, visit the online gallery at [www.embracingourdifferences.org](http://www.embracingourdifferences.org).***

### **2025 ART WINNERS:**

The **Best-in-Show Adult Artwork Award** was presented to Amanda Marie of Manchester, Connecticut, for "Through Your Story," a piece depicting a shelf of thoughtfully curated books that symbolize the transformative power of literature to foster understanding, amplify voices, and inspire personal and collective growth through shared narratives. The artist says that she finds herself "drawn to the idea of enrichment, particularly through the lens of literature. Books hold a profound power, empowering both writers and readers alike. By immersing ourselves in the narratives of

others, we open ourselves to learning and personal growth.” She adds that, when “we impose limitations or censorship on authors, we inadvertently stifle the voices of those individuals. My aim is to invite others to explore these connections and embark on their own journey of enrichment through the written word.”

The **Best-in-Show Student Artwork Award** went to Junho Chung, an 11th grader at Brooks School in Seoul, Republic of Korea, for “Nevertheless.” In it, a ballerina and a child gracefully navigate the ruins of a war-torn landscape, embodying resilience, hope, and the enduring spirit of art amidst destruction. Chung says that the ballerina symbolizes hope. “Dancing amidst the backdrop of rubble and destruction, her courage and passion remind us of the existence of hope. It is our responsibility to instill hope in those who demonstrate such courage. We must act to preserve her hope.”

The **Best-in-Show Adult Quotation Award** is: “Choosing to speak when others are silent is an act of bravery this world needs,” submitted by Kim Howard from Bloomington, Indiana.

The **Best-in-Show Student Quotation Award** is: “We can choose to build bridges or spend a lifetime lost on our own islands,” submitted by Aashna Parsa, a 7th grade student from San Jose, CA.

While EOD is best known for its annual art exhibitions, its educational initiatives continue all year long. These include professional development opportunities for educators, reading days, unity days, and other learning programs and events. “These ongoing arts education programs represent the most important aspect of our efforts,” says Wertheimer. “We’re reaching and impacting the lives of thousands of students and teachers, both locally and around the world.” She adds these programs have made an

impact on more than 55,357 students and 2,048 educators during the 2023-2024 school year alone.

*For more information about these exhibits or Embracing Our Differences, call 941-404-5710 or visit [www.embracingourdifferences.org](http://www.embracingourdifferences.org).*

### **About Embracing Our Differences**

Embracing Our Differences is a nonprofit 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](http://www.embracingourdifferences.org).