

PEOPLE & BUSINESS

Embracing Our Differences Opens 21st Anniversary Exhibit

By [Sarasota Scene](#) |
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Embracing Our Differences celebrates the start of its 21st anniversary with a free Grand Opening Celebration on Sunday, January 21, noon-3 p.m., in Sarasota's downtown Bayfront Park. The event features three performances by Jah Movement. Local arts and education organizations, including The Ringling, Sarasota Art Museum of Ringling College, CreArte Latino, Van Wezel, Asolo Rep, ALSO Youth and Suncoast Campaign for Grade Level Reading will have booths featuring interactive, kid-friendly activities. Big Blue Grilled Cheese Company, El Indio Tacos y Snacks, and Krewe Du Snoball food trucks will be stationed at the event. EOD will also recognize Best-in-Show winners and many of the artists and quoters who had their works selected for display.

Sarah Werthimer, EOD's executive director, says that this year's response to the call for artwork and inspirational quotations was strong with 16,604 entries pouring in from 125 countries and 44 states. Students from 584 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 original quotations. Adult quotation winners each receive \$2,000; students receive \$2,000, which they split with their school's English Language Arts program.

2024 WINNERS:

The **Best-in-Show Adult artwork award** went to Samantha Dennis from Woodbridge,

Canada, for “Hand”le with Care,” which shows hands of different colors and abilities gently cradling colorful beams of light that are shaped as a heart.

The **Best-in-Show Student artwork** went to Sylvia Tirado, an 11th grader at Wycombe Abbey (school) in High Wycombe, United Kingdom, for her work, “Are My Roots Showing?” which depicts a young woman of color examining her dyed blond hair for signs of her true hair color, which is dark.

The **Best-in-Show Adult quotation award** is “I stand against hatred with love, prejudice with acceptance, and ignorance with knowledge,” submitted by Md. Faisal Arefin from Rajshahi, Bangladesh.

The **Best-in-Show Student quotation award** is “Spread kindness like the world depends on it...because it does,” submitted by Jessie Ochsendorf, a 7th grader at Pine View School in Osprey. Her teacher is Susy Grandusky.

To see all of the works in the 2024 exhibit, visit the online gallery at www.embracingourdifferences.org.

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 587,000 students since they were launched in 2004. 58,122 students and 1,981 teachers participated in the 2022-2023 school year alone.

For more information about these exhibits or Embracing Our Differences, call 941-404-5710 or visit 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 different perspectives and experiences 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.