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Embracing Our Differences Appoints New Student Board Member

Stella Misantone, a junior at Riverview High School, joins the board after graduating from the STAR (Students Take Active Roles) Leadership Training program.

(May 8, 2025) Sarah Wertheimer, the CEO and president of Embracing Our Differences (EOD), announced that the organization has appointed Stella Misantone as a STAR student board member. Misantone, a junior in the International Baccalaureate program at Riverview High School, is a graduate of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Sarasota and DeSoto Counties' 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.

Misantone, 16, is deeply involved in both her school and community. She volunteers regularly at Sarasota Memorial Hospital and Selby Library, and holds leadership positions in five clubs at Riverview, including Key Club, Red Cross Club, and Jewelry for St. Jude. She also remains active at the Boys & Girls Clubs, where her experience in the STAR program inspired her to pursue more leadership and service opportunities.

While still exploring her career path, Misantone is drawn to the fields of medicine and psychology. She credits Embracing Our Differences as one of the

early influences in her life. “Attending the exhibition every year in elementary school taught me valuable lessons and molded who I am today,” she says. “By serving on the EOD board, I’ll have the opportunity to give back to an organization that’s made such a difference in my life and in our community.”

“It is always inspiring to welcome a STAR board member who brings such heart and commitment to making a difference,” says Wertheimer. “Stella’s leadership and passion for service reflect the values we work to instill in young people across our community.”

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., Jeff Spalter, 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 nonprofit organization that employs the transformational power of art and education to promote a more inclusive community that celebrates individuality and common humanity. 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.