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Embracing Our Differences Expands Programs in St. Petersburg

An annual “friend raising” luncheon and the launch of the Bucket Fillers Reading Day demonstrate EOD’s deepening engagement with the Pinellas County region.

(October 2, 2025) As it approaches its third year of presenting its inspiring outdoor exhibitions in St. Petersburg, Embracing Our Differences (EOD) is broadening its roots in Pinellas County with two initiatives: The inaugural St. Petersburg Luncheon on December 5 and the launch of Bucket Fillers Reading Day on November 13. Both efforts build on EOD’s mission to promote kindness, respect, and inclusion through the power of art and education.

Christina Fraser, EOD’s vice president of operations, notes that the fundraising luncheon marks a new chapter in EOD’s presence in Pinellas County.

“St. Petersburg has embraced our outdoor exhibitions over the past two years, and now we’re excited to deepen our connections with local schools, families, and civic leaders,” she says. “This inaugural luncheon is both a ‘friend raiser’ and a fundraiser—a celebration of what we’ve accomplished together and an invitation for new partners to join our mission.”

For the past 14 years, EOD’s annual luncheon in Sarasota has highlighted the profound influence of EOD’s programs. During this event, educators and students share personal stories of how participating in EOD’s annual outdoor art exhibition and related

educational initiatives have shaped their lives. Last year's sold-out event, which celebrated the power of the arts to promote community engagement, respect, and meaningful dialogue, attracted 600 guests and raised more than \$300,000.

In November, EOD will launch its first Bucket Fillers Reading Day in Pinellas County in partnership with Maximo Elementary, Lakeview Fundamental, and Campbell Park Elementary. Now in its eighth year in Sarasota and Manatee counties, the program teaches children how to "fill buckets" through simple acts of kindness, love, and appreciation for others. Each participating student and classroom will receive books to continue the lessons of compassion and respect long after the day ends.

"We are deeply grateful for the continued support and partnership of Pinellas County Schools," says Fraser.

For 23 years, EOD has welcomed the community to its annual outdoor exhibitions of 50 billboard-sized works of art and quotations celebrating inclusion, kindness, and respect. With more than 4.8 million visitors to date, the exhibitions remain the centerpiece of year-round education programming that fosters understanding and connection through cultural field trips, reading days, student clubs, and teacher workshops. **The 2026 exhibitions run January 17–April 19 in Bayfront Park, Sarasota, and March 7–April 12 in Poynter Park, St. Petersburg.** EOD will host its annual luncheon on Thursday, February 20, at The Ora in Sarasota.

The St. Petersburg Luncheon is Friday, December 5, 11:30 a.m.–1 p.m., at the Mahaffey Theater, 400 First Street, SE, St. Petersburg. Tickets are \$65 (individual); and \$100 (patron). Sponsorships are also available. To purchase

***tickets, inquire about sponsorships or for more information, visit
EmbracingOurDifferences.org or call 941-404-5710.***

Photo captions:

- *Devon Poulous reads “Buddy the Bucket Filler” to kindergarten students at Cranberry Elementary in Sarasota during Embracing Our Differences’ 2025 Bucket Fillers Reading Day. Each child received their own book to continue lessons in kindness and respect.*
- *Kindergarten students proudly hold up their new books after a classroom reading during Embracing Our Differences’ Bucket Fillers Reading Day, a program now in its eighth year.*
- *Christina Fraser, vice president of operations at Embracing Our Differences, notes that the organization’s inaugural St. Petersburg Luncheon marks a new chapter in its outreach across Pinellas County.*
- *Embracing Our Differences’ annual outdoor exhibition at Poynter Park in St. Petersburg features billboard-sized artworks and quotations promoting kindness, respect, and inclusion. The 2026 exhibition runs March 7–April 12.*

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.