

Observer



Art students row together toward 2017 World Rowing Championships in Sarasota

by: [Jay Heater](#) Managing Editor

Heidi Enneking knew she had some talented artists in her sixth-grade class at Braden River Middle School.

Now she knows they are fast, too.

Enneking's class volunteered to be part of "Adopt a Team," a program that is a collaboration between the Sarasota and Manatee school districts and the nonprofit Embracing Our Differences. The idea was for schools to select, at random, one of the countries participating in the 2017 World Rowing Championships to be held Sept.

24-Oct. 1 at Nathan Benderson Park.



The schools would then research the country they selected with guest speakers and videos, and develop art to be eventually showcased during the championships. Braden River picked Argentina.



Everything was going to plan for Enneking and her students until they left for the weekend on May 12. When they returned the following Monday, the artwork was gone.

"We looked everywhere," Enneking said. "We just couldn't find it. Oh my gosh, we had to do it from memory."

With the deadline approaching to turn in the art, Collin Barrett, Hunter Malley and Aiden Shea, the three students' whose collaborative effort was selected as the one to be displayed at the World Championships, went back to work. They had been having so much fun with the project, it didn't matter. They recreated it.

"Argentina is very colorful and happy," Shea said. "And their music

is different."

Barrett added, "Their culture is divine."

Although things became hectic toward the end of the project, Enneking said it was a great learning experience for the students.

"This was a wonderful opportunity to be part of something exciting," she said. "We have a couple of rowers in the class, but most of them didn't know about the rowing championships. It turned out to be a great project to learn about arts and world cultures, so it fit in well with our curriculum."

"And I didn't know how beautiful Argentina is. It made me want to go there."

Julia Hoffman, the special events and programming manager for the 2017 World Rowing Championships, said the program meets the vision of Meredith Scerba, the World Championships executive director, for community engagement.

"For me, personally," Hoffman said. "This has been my favorite event, engaging the youth in our community."

The schools, and specifically art teachers, selected their countries on April 2. Forty-one countries were selected as the entire field, which will include more than 60 teams, hadn't been formed yet. They were told to create a single piece of art.

"We left it up to the teachers what to do," Hoffman said. "There were going to be 41 different ways to approach this."

Hoffman said the World Championships offers lessons for both students and the public in general. "There are so many people who don't know what life is like outside of Sarasota County," she said. "We are bringing the world to them." For the first three days of the World Championships, students will be invited to Benderson Park to see the artwork and to visit with a representative of the country their school drew. Hoffman specified the project is not a competition, but a display of art.

Michael Shelton, the executive director of Embracing Our Differences, said his staff would pick up the artwork from each school on June 2 and then have it professionally photographed into a digital file. The artwork will be blown up on 12



feet by 16 feet display panels that will be located in the north parking lot of the park.

Hoffman already has seen some of the works. "Some of them are brilliant," she said. "They tell a story about the country, the culture and the landscape, then they incorporate something about rowing. They have to put a boat in there, so it makes it more challenging."