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## **Embracing Our Differences Recognized by Florida's Division of Cultural Affairs With Diversity and Inclusion Award**

*The award, which will be presented at the 2016 Convening Culture Conference in Fort Lauderdale on February 1 and 2, recognizes Embracing Our Differences for its work promoting diversity and inclusion throughout the Sarasota-Manatee region.*

(Sarasota, Florida) The Florida Department of State's Division of Cultural Affairs has honored Embracing Our Differences with a Diversity and Inclusion Award in the amount of \$1,000 for the organization's ongoing efforts to promote diversity and inclusion in Sarasota and Manatee counties. The award, which will be presented at the 2016 Convening Culture Conference in Fort Lauderdale on February 1 and 2, recognizes innovative and exceptional efforts that promote diversity in arts and cultural programming. Suzanne Atwell, vice mayor of the City of Sarasota, nominated Embracing Our Differences for the award. Other organizations that received the award this year include the Glazer Children's Museum in Tampa, the Orlando Repertory Theatre and the Cummer Museum in Jacksonville.

The Division of Cultural Affairs of the Florida Department of State has long recognized diversity as one of the key attributes to the state's vibrant cultural landscape. Its Diversity & Inclusion Awards program was created to recognize the

efforts of individuals and organizations working to make arts and cultural programming in Florida as diverse and inclusive as possible.

"We're deeply honored to receive this recognition," says Michael Shelton, executive director of Embracing Our Differences. "We're grateful to Florida's Division of Cultural Affairs for its commitment to providing resources to create an environment in which Floridians recognize that a healthy respect for diversity and inclusion is the cornerstone of any progressive society."

Since 2004, downtown Sarasota's Island Park has been the backdrop for Embracing Our Differences' colorful, larger-than-life canvases integrating powerful imagery and thought-provoking messages celebrating diversity. The scale and impact of this outdoor exhibition has continued to grow, attracting more than two million visitors since its inception. **The 2016 exhibit is set for March 30 to May 31 in Sarasota's Island Park.** In addition to the annual outdoor exhibits, Embracing Our Differences' other programs include annual workshops and retreats providing diversity curricula for area educators, free bus transportation for students and teachers to visit cultural venues, and student docent programs that provide student-led tours of the annual exhibit. *For more information about 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 not-for-profit organization that uses the power of art and education to expand consciousness and open the heart to celebrate 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).**