

MEDIA CONTACTS

Sarah Wertheimer ▪ 941-404-5710 ▪ sarah@embracingourdifferences.org

Su Byron ▪ 941-955-8103 ▪ subyron@verizon.net

Celebrating 15 Years!

Embracing Our Differences Announces

Winners of 2018 Outdoor Art Exhibit

The organization received 8,325 entries from 98 countries as submissions for the 15th annual outdoor art exhibit celebrating diversity. Elisa Uzcategui, an eighth-grade student at Sarasota Military Academy Prep, received the Best-in-Show Student. Hayley Peace, a sixth-grade student at Pine View School, won Best-in-Show inspirational quote.

(Sarasota, FL) Since 2004, Embracing Our Differences has used the power of art and prose to promote diversity. One way it accomplishes this is through its annual, juried international outdoor art exhibition consisting of 45 billboard-sized works of art, each accompanied by an inspirational quote. This year, as the organization celebrates its 15th anniversary, the response to the call for artwork and inspirational quotes was impressive, with 8,325 entries pouring in from 98 countries. Students from 227 schools around the world submitted artwork or quotes to the juried exhibit; 54 of this year's winners were students, and 49 of those were from local schools. In honor of EOD's 15th anniversary, 15 of the pieces on display represent a special collection of past artworks. **The winning quotes and art will be showcased in the 15th-anniversary exhibit, April 4 to June 1, in Sarasota's Island Park.** *For more information about*

this exhibit or Embracing Our Differences, call 941-404-5710 or visit www.embracingourdifferences.org.

Sarah Wertheimer, the incoming executive director of Embracing Our Differences, shares that the art selection team was deeply touched by the quality and sincerity of this year's submissions. "Yet again, thousands of people answered the call to create art that celebrates the values of diversity, inclusion and respect," she says. "We're honored to enter our 15th year with this outpouring of faith in humanity from the global human family."

According to Wertheimer, the flood of submissions proves that artists across the world strongly believe that all people should feel safe and empowered to be themselves. "That's our guiding philosophy," she says. "We select the quotes and artwork that best reflect that conviction. We can't create billboards for every profound statement we receive. But it's thrilling to see how many people share this conviction." According to Wertheimer, the first criterion in judging a submission is by the underlying concept or idea each represents. She adds that the winning images combine a deep understanding of both medium and message. "It's not enough to have something to say," she says. "You have to get your message across when the art is blown up to billboard size."

Awards 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 winners each receive \$1,000; students receive \$1,000 to be directed to their school's art program.

2018 ART WINNERS

The **Best-in-Show Adult** winner for art is “**Choice**” by **Larisa Okhotna from Svitlovodsk, Ukraine**. Her dynamic work shows a tiny flower, struggling to survive in arid earth. On one side, a hand attempts to water it; on the other side, a shoe, menacingly, is about to stomp on it. The artist says the work is an attempt to show, “how people react differently to situations and to the world. One person is trying to destroy the flower; the other trying to nourish it. Every day, we have a choice to recognize and nurture the beauty of nature or to ignore or destroy it. I’d like this piece to inspire people to think more about our beautiful earth, which can still be saved.”

Elisa Uzcategui, an 8th-grade student at Sarasota Military Academy Prep, received the **Best-in-Show Student** award for her work, “**The New Rosie the Riveter.**” Rosie the Riveter is a cultural icon of World War II symbolizing women who worked in factories and shipyards for the war effort. Uzcategui’s Rosie is brown-skinned—a change from the way she is usually represented. “Rosie is a symbol of American feminism,” says Uzcategui. “I wanted to show the new Rosie in a different light, so I made Rosie multiracial. Her eyes are a mix of Caucasian and Asian traits, her hair is an Afro and her skin color resembles people of Latin American and Hispanic origins. My new Rosie represents the strength of many races.”

2018 QUOTE WINNER

Quotes selected for the 2018 exhibition include, “Sometimes being the bystander can be just as bad as being the bully” (Haylie Smith, 7th grade, Sarasota Middle School); “Flags show where we come from; actions show who we are” (Seth Morano, 11th grade, Booker High School); “Hatred is a cage, kindness is the key” (Dorian Carter, 6th grade, Pine View School); “I’d rather go alone than follow a group

of people going the wrong way” (Gianna Nicora, 7th grade); and “I'm proud being me and celebrating you being you” (Nkoyo Uche-Nwosu, Lagos, Nigeria). The award for the **Best-in-Show** inspirational quote was given to **Hayley Peace**, a 6th-grade student at Pine View School in Osprey. Her quote is: **“If your heart opens, doors will too.”** Hayley’s teacher is Fran Squires. Pine View School will receive \$1,000 for its art or creative writing department.

Wertheimer explains that the statements accompanying each artwork are vital. “Every quote provides insight into our common humanity—as well as the differences that make us all unique,” she says. “We’re always moved by the heartfelt thought, creativity, wit and compassion the quotes represent.”

Embracing Our Differences' annual juried international art exhibit is at Sarasota's Island Park, April 4- June 1. *For more information about Embracing Our Differences, call 941-404-5710 or visit www.embracingourdifferences.org.*

Embracing Our Differences’ annual outdoor exhibits are the heart of a year-round program of activities designed to use art as a catalyst to create awareness and promote diversity. **Aside from the annual outdoor exhibition, Embracing Our Differences' ongoing educational outreach programs and initiatives include:**

- **Mastering the Art of the Quote Workshops:** This workshop is designed to take the difficult topics of diversity, prejudice and inclusion and teach students to express themselves through critical thinking and creative writing. Presented in partnership with Florida Studio Theatre, the workshop fulfills a critical need of providing teachers with creative resources to meet Florida's Language Arts Standards.
- **Art Teacher Retreat:** This two-day seminar, developed in partnership with Ringling College of Art and Design, is designed to reinvigorate educators' teaching practices while offering new skills and strategies for inspiring students to explore

the abstract concepts of prejudice, diversity and inclusion. Substitute teachers are provided for participating educators. **In 2017, the 44 participating art teachers were collectively responsible for more than 12,000 students from Sarasota and Manatee counties.**

- **Lesson Plans Workshops:** Designed to deliver new and innovative methods of engaging students in critical thinking while creating the perfect environment for a rich discussion of the value of diversity and inclusion, all lesson plans identify the relevant curriculum standards, educational objectives, materials needed, activities, step-by-step instructional strategies and assessment guidelines.
 - **Summer Diversity Institute:** This three-day annual workshop provides information and support for the creation of a respectful and civil classroom culture, while offering tools and structures for educators to use with students in their classrooms and on the school campus. Participants work individually and in small groups based upon grade level, as well as school location, to create lesson plans and action plans that will be used within each school to provide support to both students and faculty.

Other programs include:

- The "**Make-a-Day-of-It!**" program, providing free bus transportation for area students and teachers to the outdoor exhibit and to other cultural venues, including Florida Studio Theatre, Mote Marine Laboratory, Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, The Ringling, Sarasota Film Festival, and Marie Selby Botanical Gardens. **12,703 students participated during the 2017 school year.**
- **Coexistence Clubs**, via partnerships with Riverview, Booker and North Port high schools, provide student-led docent tours of the annual exhibit. **Student docent tours were provided to 5,578 K-8 children visiting the 2017 exhibit. There are approximately 150 student docents.**

For more information about this exhibit or Embracing Our Differences, please call 941-404-5710 or visit www.embracingourdifferences.org.

About Embracing Our Differences

Embracing Our Differences is a not-for-profit 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.

Photo captions:

- **EOD 2018: Best in Show, Adult:** *“Choice” by Larisa Okhotna of Svitlovodsk, Ukraine.*
- **EOD 2018: Best in Show, Student:** *“The New Rosie the Riveter” by Elisa Uzcategui, 8th Grade, Sarasota Military Academy Prep, Sarasota.*
- **EOD 2018: Honorable Mention:** *“Creative Diversity in Bug Art Class” by Natasa Pegan of Branik, Slovenia.*
- **EOD 2018:** *“New American Gothic” by Logan Lott of Valdosta, Georgia.*
- **EOD 2018:** *“Shared Sacrifice” by Michael McNees and Rob Servian of Melbourne, Florida.*
- **EOD 2018:** *“A Duet is Often Better Than a Solo” by Mackenzie Reiss, Venice High School, Venice, Florida. (This won Best in Show, Student, in the 2015 exhibit.)*