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

*The award 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 for the organization's ongoing efforts to promote diversity and inclusion in Sarasota and Manatee counties. The award, which will be presented at a special awards ceremony on January 24 in Tallahassee, recognizes innovative and exceptional efforts that promote diversity in arts and cultural programming. Shirley Brown, a Sarasota County School Board member, nominated Embracing Our Differences for the award. Other organizations that received the award this year include the Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe, Orlando Repertory Theatre, Henry B. Plant Museum and Arts Ballet Theatre of Florida.

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, EOD's outdoor art exhibit, celebrating the theme of "enriching lives through diversity and inclusion," showcases the art and words of thousands of artists and writers from around the world, including hundreds of area-based students and educators. Crucial to the organization's mission are its award-winning education initiatives. Presented in partnership with the regional school districts and nationally recognized educators, these programs positively impact the lives of thousands of area teachers and students every year. These include annual workshops and retreats providing diversity curricula for area educators, free bus transportation for students and teachers to visit area cultural venues, and student docent programs in high schools. With more than 42,000 students participating in these programs in 2017, Embracing Our Differences continues to lead as one of the largest education programs in southwest Florida.

Embracing Our Differences' annual juried international art exhibit returns to Sarasota's Island Park, April 4-June 1, 2018. A call for art and quote submissions is ongoing now through January 9.

***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 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](http://www.embracingourdifferences.org).