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Community Foundation of Sarasota County Awards Grant to Embracing Our Differences for its Educator Workshops and Initiatives

*The \$5,000 grant will help fund the organization's acclaimed workshops,
retreats and initiatives.*

(Sarasota, FL) The McCauley-Brown Fund of the Community Foundation of Sarasota County recently awarded Embracing Our Differences a \$5,000 grant to help enhance its year-round educator workshops. A key component of its education initiatives, Embracing Our Differences' annual teacher workshops and retreats provide area educators with skills, strategies and resources to provide curricula and lesson plans relating to art appreciation, character building and diversity education. Teachers are also shown the importance of creating an inclusive and safe environment for all students.

“This grant opens up a world of possibilities for area educators to play a leadership role in transforming lives and making a difference with students,” says Sarah Wertheimer, the associate executive director of Embracing Our Differences. “We’re teaching concrete strategies to inspire students to reject destructive attitudes and embrace the full potential of inclusion and diversity. For both educators and students, this new awareness can be life-changing.” She adds that approximately

160 teachers, representing 16,000 students, will participate this year in EOD's educator workshops and initiatives.

EOD's initiatives for educators include:

Art Teacher Retreat: This two-day seminar, developed in partnership with Ringling College of Art and Design, is designed to reinvigorate 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.** *The next retreat is October 4 and 5, 2018.*

Creative Writing Workshops: These workshops take the difficult topics of diversity and inclusion and teach students to express themselves through critical thinking and creative writing. The workshop fulfills a critical need of providing teachers with creative resources to meet Florida's Language Arts Standards.

Lesson Plan Workshops: Designed to deliver new and innovative methods of engaging students in critical thinking while creating an ideal environment for an enriching discussion about 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 program provides information and support for the creation of a respectful and civil classroom culture. Participants create lesson plans and action plans that will be used within their schools to provide support to students and faculty.

Since 2004, EOD's outdoor art exhibit, celebrating the theme of "enriching lives through diversity," showcases the art and words of thousands of artists and writers from around the world, including hundreds of area-based students and educators. With more than 780 area teachers and 42,500 area students participating in the organization's exhibit and educational programs in 2017 alone, 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 Bayfront Park, April 4 to June 1. *For more information about this exhibit or Embracing Our Differences, please call 941-404-5710 or visit www.embracingourdifferences.org.*

About the Community Foundation of Sarasota County

The Community Foundation is a public charity founded in 1979 by the Southwest Florida Estate Planning Council as a resource for caring individuals and the causes they support, enabling them to make a charitable impact on the community. With assets of over \$333 million in more than 1,400 charitable funds, the Community Foundation awarded grants and scholarships totaling more than \$33 million dollars this past year in the areas of education, health and human services, the arts, animal welfare, and the environment. Since our founding, more than \$217 million has been invested back into the community through grants and scholarships. For more information, visit www.CFSarasota.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.

