

MEDIA CONTACTS

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The SunTrust Foundation Awards Grant to Embracing Our Differences

The \$10,000 grant will help fund the organization's annual teacher workshops, retreats and seminars—a key component of EOD's educational initiatives.

(Sarasota-Manatee, FL) The SunTrust Foundation recently awarded Embracing Our Differences a \$10,000 grant to help fund its educational outreach programs. A key component of its ongoing educational 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. Presented in partnership with regional school districts and nationally recognized educators, these programs positively impact the lives of thousands of area teachers and students every year.

“With more than 780 teachers and 37,000 students participating in these programs in 2016, Embracing Our Differences continues to lead as one of the largest education programs in southwest Florida,” says Sarah Wertheimer, Embracing Our Differences' associate executive director. "The resources we provide to our teachers are a top priority for us. This very generous grant from the SunTrust Foundation will help us provide more educators with the resources and best practices necessary to create a comprehensive approach to expressing the importance diversity and inclusion hold in improving the quality of life for everyone.”

“On behalf of the SunTrust Foundation, we’re proud to support Embracing our Differences’ educational outreach efforts to help provide teachers with the resources they need to celebrate and encourage diversity and inclusion with students across the region,” said Deborah Minnick, managing director, Southwest Florida, SunTrust Bank.

Embracing Our Differences’ annual, juried international art exhibit returns to Sarasota’s Island Park April 1-May 31.

Aside from the annual outdoor exhibition, Embracing Our Differences’ ongoing educational outreach programs and initiatives include:

- **Teacher workshops** developed by nationally acclaimed educators to provide curricula and lesson plans relating to art appreciation, character building and diversity education. These include:
 - **Art Teacher Retreat:** A two-day workshop, presented in partnership with the Ringling College of Art and Design, designed to reinvigorate educators’ teaching practices while offering new skills and strategies for inspiring students to explore the concepts of prejudice, diversity and inclusion. **In 2016, the 30 participating art teachers were collectively responsible for more than 9,000 students from Sarasota and Manatee counties.**
 - **Creative Writing Workshops** Presented in partnership with nationally recognized educators, these workshops are designed to take the difficult and abstract topic of diversity while teaching students to express themselves through critical thinking and creative writing.
 - **Lesson Plans Workshops:** Designed to deliver new and innovative methods of engaging students in critical thinking while creating their perfect environment for a rich discussion of the value of diversity and inclusion. Lesson plans identify and incorporate the relevant curriculum standards, educational objectives, materials, activities,

step-by-step lesson plans and assessment guidelines needed for a successful outcome.

- **Summer Diversity Institute – Bullying Prevention:** A three-day workshop designed to give area educators the skills and tools they need to take a stand against bullying on and off campus. **Forty-eight area educators from 11 schools took part in the 2016 workshop.**
- 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. **12,469 students participated during the 2016 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 6,820 K-8 children visiting the 2016 exhibit. There are approximately 145 student docents.**

For more information about this year's 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.**

About the SunTrust Foundation

The SunTrust Foundation is dedicated to the company's purpose of Lighting the Way to Financial Well-Being by engaging organizations to advance financial confidence. Grants and activities focus primarily on financial empowerment, but also include education, health and human services, civic improvement and cultural growth. The SunTrust Foundation supports American Red Cross disaster

relief efforts and contributes as a United Way Global Corporate Leader. Established in 2008, the SunTrust Foundation has proudly provided grants totaling more than \$112 million throughout the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic regions.

Photo caption: *Craig W. Tuley (Client Advisor, SunTrust Bank), Sarah Wertheimer (Associate Executive Director, Embracing Our Differences), Graci McGillicuddy (Co-founder, Embracing Our Differences), James Roque (Client Advisor, SunTrust Bank), Keith Johnson (Client Advisor, SunTrust Bank) and Dennis McGillicuddy (Co-founder, Embracing Our Differences).*

