

MEDIA CONTACTS

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

Su Byron ▪ subyron@verizon.net

“Enriching Lives Through Diversity”

Call to Artists and Writers For

14th Annual Embracing Our Differences Exhibit

Original works of art and statements that celebrate the theme of "enriching lives through diversity" are being accepted through January 10, 2017. Embracing Our Differences' 14th annual outdoor exhibit is April 1-May 31, 2017, in Island Park in downtown Sarasota.

(Sarasota, FL) Embracing Our Differences invites artists and writers to submit art and inspirational statements for its 14th annual outdoor art exhibit celebrating diversity. The work of 45 artists and writers will be selected for the exhibit, which runs April 1-May 31, 2017, in Sarasota's Island Park. Final selections, based on artistic excellence and originality reflecting the theme, “enriching lives through diversity,” will be made by a panel of professional artists, curators and arts educators. The artwork will also be evaluated on how effectively it will read when enlarged to the exhibit's billboard-size dimensions of 16 x 12.5 feet. There is no submission fee or limit on the number of entries. Submissions must be submitted online or postmarked no later than January 10, 2017. **Artists and writers can submit directly online at:**

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

"We're always delighted by the high quality of art and statements that we receive from all corners of the globe," says Michael Shelton, executive director of Embracing Our Differences. "These new and fresh interpretations of our theme powerfully express the impact and rising importance of diversity and acceptance in our lives."

Shelton adds that participation is open to everyone, including professional and amateur artists, photographers, teachers and students. For the 2016 exhibit, the organization received a record 8,350 works of art and statements from people representing 104 countries and 44 states. Students from 106 elementary, middle and high schools comprised about 60 percent of the submissions.

A total of \$3,000 in cash awards will be presented in the form of three separate awards; \$1,000 each for "Best-in-Show Adult," "Best-in-Show Student," and the "People's Choice." Both of the "Best-in-Show" awards will be granted by a three-judge panel of art professionals; the "People's Choice" award will be determined by visitors to the 2017 exhibit.

Another critical part of the Embracing Our Differences exhibit is the impact of the inspirational quotations that accompany each work of art. These quotations provide members of our community a chance to put into writing their thoughts, feelings and ideas that reflect our theme of "enriching lives through diversity."

"The combination of visual art and the written word adds a deeper dimension to the overall experience," says Shelton, adding that quote entries must be original and 20 words or less. A \$1,000 cash award will be presented to the best original quotation exhibited.

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:**

- **Teacher workshops** developed by nationally acclaimed educators to provide curricula and lesson plans relating to art appreciation, character building and diversity education. These 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.
 - **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 (Bully Prevention in Schools):** This three-day annual event provides information and support on bullying in our schools, in cyberspace, and in our community. The workshop offers support 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 as they encounter incidents.

- 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.
- **Coexistence Clubs**, via partnerships with Riverview, Booker and North Port high schools, provide student-led docent tours of the annual exhibit.

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

About Embracing Our Differences

Embracing Our Differences is a project of Coexistence, Inc., a local non-profit that began in 2004. The project showcases a community-based outdoor exhibit promoting positive, inspirational artistic and verbal expressions of inclusion, acceptance and respect. The mission of Embracing Our Differences is to use the transformational power of the arts to educate and inspire to create a better world. **www.embracingourdifferences.org; 941-404-5710.**