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Embracing Our Differences Receives an EdExploreSRQ Endowment Match from The Patterson Foundation

The \$200,000 in matching funds will provide vital resources for the organization's exhibit field trips and its Make-A-Day-of-It! program, an educational outreach initiative that provides free bus transportation for thousands of area students and teachers to visit regional arts and cultural venues and events.

(Sarasota, FL) Embracing Our Differences recently received an EdExploreSRQ Endowment Match from The Patterson Foundation, which will provide vital resources for EOD's annual free exhibit field trips and for its Make-A-Day-of-It! program, an educational outreach initiative that provides free bus transportation for thousands of area students and teachers to visit regional arts and cultural venues and events. The \$200,000 endowment, which is managed and administered by the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, matches EOD's original \$100,000 endowment provided by Dennis and Graci McGillicuddy and The Swart Family Foundation.

Created in partnership with The Patterson Foundation and Sarasota County schools, EdExploreSRQ.com is a web-based platform that helps teachers, principals and parents identify and learn about curriculum-aligned learning experiences offered by nonprofits and teaching artists in our community. *For more information, visit edexploresrq.com.*

“The Patterson Foundation created EdExploreSRQ in partnership with Sarasota County schools to provide accessible, curriculum-aligned experiences for students inside

and outside of the classroom,” said Debra Jacobs, president and CEO of The Patterson Foundation. “The endowment match opportunity encourages generosity, and provides the opportunity for organizations and donors to work together to ensure the long-term future of these experiences.”

“We’re deeply honored,” says Michael Shelton, executive director of Embracing Our Differences. “These funds open a world of possibilities for thousands of students and educators in our area.” Shelton adds that participants in the Make-A-Day-of-It! program not only experience the Embracing Our Differences’ exhibits at Sarasota’s Island Park every year, they also receive free transportation 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. More than 25,000 students participated during the 2015 school year.

Shelton explains that Embracing Our Differences coordinates with partner organizations to “present a curriculum that complements our mission to promote art appreciation, character building, and diversity education. For example, The Ringling’s education department will create a program exploring themes of personal expression and cultural identity in specific works of art. Other groups will collaborate in the same way. Participants will see that the themes we express at our exhibits are truly universal.”

The Community Foundation of Sarasota County is an EdExploreSRQ partner dedicated to sustaining and growing EdExploreSRQ.com for the benefit of all Sarasota County students. In 2013, the Community Foundation committed \$500,000 over five years for explorations—particularly for schools with higher concentrations of students from low-income families. The EdExploreSRQ Endowment Fund is administered by the Community Foundation of Sarasota County.

“We commend the donors who invest in creative efforts to impact our community’s students in life-changing ways through arts, cultural, and science-based experiences,” says Roxie Jerde, president and CEO of the Community Foundation of Sarasota County. “We are proud to have the opportunity to steward this fund, partnering with Embracing Our Differences to leverage their programs for powerful and interactive learning for Sarasota’s students for years to come.”

“We’re all in this together, says Shelton. “The Patterson Foundation, the Community Foundation of Sarasota County and our partner organizations share Embracing Our Differences' deep commitment to the human family.”

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 local non-profit that began in 2004. The organization 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. *For more information, visit www.embracingourdifferences.org.*