

## **MEDIA CONTACTS**

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### **Nationally Acclaimed Sculptor's Work to be Installed at Downtown Roundabout on April 17**

*The Sarasota City Commission and Public Art Committee approved Embracing Our Differences' selection of a powerful work of public art by Arizona artist Blessing Hancock. The sculpture, entitled "Embracing Our Differences," will be installed in the center of the roundabout at Main Street and Orange Avenue in downtown Sarasota on April 17.*

(Sarasota, FL) "Embracing Our Differences," a sculpture by Arizona-based sculptor S. Blessing Hancock, is scheduled to be installed in the center of the roundabout at Main Street and Orange Avenue in downtown Sarasota at 6 a.m. on Sunday, April 17. The stainless steel, 20-foot-tall, site-specific sculpture resembles an infinity symbol and shines with the rainbow colors of the Embracing Our Differences logo, a local non-profit best known for its annual outdoor art exhibit and educational initiatives promoting diversity.

The character of the art reflects the character of those behind it.

Dennis McGillicuddy, John Meshad and iStar Financial are the developers behind One Palm, a mixed-use project at the intersection of Palm Avenue and Ringling Boulevard in downtown Sarasota. In October, 2014, the team requested that it fulfill its public art contribution to the city of Sarasota by commissioning a sculpture that reflected Embracing Our Differences' mission. City zoning rules require a public art contribution

from large downtown construction projects. The Public Art Committee leads the selection of public art, but the Sarasota City Commission has the final say. The city's official criteria for public art include a balance of artistic styles, excellence, durability and moderate price. The project was approved by the city's Public Art Committee in September, and by Sarasota City Commission in October.

Michael Shelton, executive director of Embracing Our Differences, explains that his organization received 39 submissions in response to a nationwide call to artists. He then gathered a panel of five judges: **Vicky Randall**, a regionally based artist and Ringling College instructor who has participated in more 180 invitational exhibitions; **Susan McLeod**, who had served on Sarasota Sculpture Center's board of directors, and on the board of trustees of the International Sculpture Center and American Craft Enterprises; **Tim Cameresi**, an artist and designer whose clients include Embracing Our Differences; **Graci McGillicuddy**, past member of the Florida Arts Council and co-founder and board member of Embracing Our Differences; and **Shannon Warren**, a Florida artist known for generously sharing her time and talent to organizations she feels can benefit from her talent, including the Child Protection Center.

"The panel narrowed the submissions to three artists, whom we invited to come to Sarasota and share their concepts," says Shelton. "Ultimately, the panel chose Hancock's work for its powerful symbolic message celebrating the infinite power of human diversity." Shelton adds that the sculpture's colors match Embracing Our Difference's brightly colored logo of red, yellow, green and blue.

Hancock's description of the work affirms the humanistic power of public art: "There is enormous potential for public art that is skillfully integrated with the built environment. As an artist, my goal is to find new ways to live with art—ways in which art relates to its setting, enriches the human experience and creates an atmosphere of participation, curiosity, and connection to community."

The artist owns a 14,000-square-foot fabrication facility in Tucson, which she shares with 14 other artists, designers, engineers and craftspeople, who make art out of fabricated metal, acrylic materials, LED lighting, and electronics. Hancock's own sculpture is largely site-specific; she has completed monumental sculpture projects throughout the world.

"Public art not only enhances a community, it helps create community," says Shelton. "It's part of the fabric of life in the Sarasota-Manatee area. Blessing Hancock's powerful sculpture will only add to the conversation of ideas that public art creates."

Embracing Our Differences' annual outdoor exhibition is currently displayed in Sarasota's Island Park through May 31. *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 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](http://www.embracingourdifferences.org).*

### **About One Palm**

One Palm is Sarasota's newest luxury rental project offering easy access to Sarasota's business districts with an exciting array of entertainment, cultural attractions, world class

shopping and dining. One Palm offers an unprecedented living experience with first class amenities including a roof top pool and bar, entertainment area, cyber café, coffee bar and a fitness/wellness center. Residents may choose from one, two or three bedroom models with breathtaking views of the downtown waterfront, a lush tropical courtyard or the city skyline. Each feature of the residences has been carefully selected to ensure comfort and convenience . . . from expansive balconies, tiled bathrooms with walk-in showers, front-load washers and dryers, large closets, well-appointed kitchens with designer cabinetry, granite countertops and stainless steel appliances.