

## **MEDIA CONTACTS**

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## **Embracing Our Differences' Annual Luncheon is Set for December 5**

**Keynote Speaker is Dr. Rachel Shelley,  
Booker High Principal and Florida's 2017 Principal of the Year**

*This annual event pays homage to the organization's transformative educational outreach programs. This year's event marks the organization's 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary.*

(Sarasota, FL) Michael Shelton, executive director of Embracing Our Differences, announced that the organization's annual luncheon is set for Tuesday, December 5, noon (registration is at 11:30 a.m.), at Michael's On East, 1212 South East Avenue in Sarasota. Sponsored by the Gulf Coast Community Foundation and co-chaired by Carol Buchanan and Graci and Dennis McGillicuddy, this annual event pays homage to the organization's acclaimed educational initiatives. This year, keynote speaker is Dr. Rachel Shelley, the principal of Booker High School and Florida's 2017 Principal of the Year. With more than 28 years of experience in K-12 education, Shelley has been praised by her colleagues for her dedication to helping every student succeed and for relationship-based leadership. The event will also feature a student who will share the many ways Embracing Our Difference's programs changed and inspired him.

*Tickets start at \$50. For more information or to purchase tickets, call 941-404-5710.*

This year the organization celebrates its 15-year anniversary.

“Embracing Our Differences launches its 15<sup>th</sup> season at a pivotal moment in American history,” says Shelton. “Sadly, hate isn’t a thing of the past in our society. Now more than ever, the message of inclusion matters. Now more than ever, we can’t take that message for granted. At Embracing Our Differences, we keep that spirit of inclusion alive in our hearts and actions. Thanks to the passion and commitment of thousands of participants, patrons, and volunteers over these 15 years, ‘embracing diversity’ is no longer just an empty slogan.”

Since 2004, EOD’s outdoor art exhibit, celebrating the theme of “enriching lives through diversity and inclusion,” showcases the art and words of thousands of artists and writers from around the world, including hundreds of area-based students and educators. Crucial to the organization’s mission are its award-winning education initiatives. Presented in partnership with the regional school districts and nationally recognized educators, these programs positively impact the lives of thousands of area teachers and students every year. These include annual workshops and retreats providing diversity curricula for area educators, free bus transportation for students and teachers to visit area cultural venues, and student docent programs in high schools. With more than 42,000 students participating in these programs in 2017, 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 Island Park, April 4-June 1, 2018. A call for art and quote submissions is ongoing now through January 9.

***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 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](http://www.embracingourdifferences.org).