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Graphic Designer from Spain Wins "People's Choice Award" in the 2015 Embracing Our Differences' Exhibit

Tinot Asso's work, "Black and White," was voted best in show by exhibit goers. Asso received a \$1,000 cash award.

(Sarasota, FL) "Black and White," Tinot Asso's heartwarming depiction of two toddlers—one black and one white—won visitors' hearts and the "People's Choice Award" at Embracing Our Differences' 12th annual outdoor juried art exhibit celebrating diversity. Asso, who lives in Girona, Spain, received a cash award of \$1,000. His exhibit banner was sponsored by Skip and Gail Sack.

In creating "Black and White," Asso expresses his conviction that, "the mix of colors signifies that all races come from the same place and there are no differences. The mix of races is beautiful and inevitable." Asso, who is a graphic designer, used painting and digital technology and "my imagination" to create the work. "We are living in such an individualized and egocentric world that we sometimes forget we are painted with the same brush," he says. "I'm grateful that the exhibit goers enjoyed my work."

Sarah Wertheimer, associate executive director of Embracing Our Differences, says that more than 600 people completed the annual exhibit survey, which includes ballots for visitors to choose their favorite artwork. "This award is especially meaningful

because it's determined by exhibit goers choosing the artwork that has moved and captivated them the most," she says.

For 12 years, "Embracing Our Differences" has drawn on the passion and perception of artists, children and others to create powerful statements of diversity and acceptance in its annual outdoor public art exhibition consisting of 39 billboard-sized works of art and accompanying quotes. This year, the organization received nearly 6,500 total artworks and statements from people representing 42 states and 80 countries, including Australia, Portugal, Haiti, Israel, Iran, Kuwait, Canada and Italy. Students from 118 elementary, middle and high schools submitted both art and quotes. This year's exhibits at Island Park in Sarasota and Riverwalk in Bradenton, both of which closed on May 22, were attended by 271,000 people. A total of 2.1 million people have visited the exhibit since its inception in 2004. (*See attached PDF for more facts.*)

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:
 - **Creative Writing Workshops** presented in partnership with Florida Studio Theatre and nationally recognized educators. These are designed to tackle the abstract topic of diversity by teaching students to express themselves through critical thinking and creative writing. **Collectively, the 105 teachers participating in**

2014 were responsible for more than 15,000 students from Sarasota and Manatee counties.

- o **Art Teacher Retreat:** Presented in partnership with Ringling College of Art and Design, this two-day retreat is focused on reinvigorating art educators' creativity while teaching new skills and strategies for inspiring students to explore the concepts of prejudice and diversity. **Last year, the 37 participating art teachers were collectively responsible for more than 12,000 students from Sarasota and Manatee counties.**
- o **Lesson Plans Workshops:** Designed to provide curriculum-aligned lesson plans and other resource materials. Participating teachers discover new and innovative methods of engaging students in critical thinking while creating the perfect environment for a rich discussion on the value of diversity.
- o **Embrace Courage: Bully Prevention in Schools:** 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. **Over 60 area educators participated in the recent inaugural edition of the 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. **12,720 students participated during the 2015 school year.**
- A **docent program** that, via partnerships with Riverview, Southeast and North Port high schools, provides student-led docent tours of the annual exhibit. **Student docent tours were provided to 7,706 K-8 children visiting the 2015 exhibits. There are approximately 115 student docents.**

For more information about this exhibit or Embracing Our Differences, please 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.**