

## **Learning to Teach Diversity: “Embracing Our Differences” Holds Annual Fall Teacher Workshops**



*A key component of its ongoing educational initiatives, Embracing Our Differences’ annual teacher workshops provide area teachers with new skills, strategies and resources to bring their students creative new ways to think, learn and succeed at the annual Embracing Our Differences exhibit and beyond.*

(Sarasota, FL) Since 2004, Embracing Our Differences’ international outdoor art exhibit celebrating the theme of “enriching lives through diversity,” has showcased the work of artists and writers from all walks of

life, including that of many area students. In 2013, submissions of art and quotes by 39 local students were included in the juried exhibit. That success can be attributed, in large part, the participation of area teachers in Embracing Our Differences' teacher workshops. Designed by nationally acclaimed educators, these workshops provide teachers with the skills, tools and resources they need to help their students create meaningful art and quotes eligible for submission to the exhibition. **Two of those workshops, "Writing About Diversity," and the Art Teacher Retreat, will take place October 1-4, 2013.**

"Since 2004, more than 500 teachers have participated in our workshops, which represent one of the most important aspects of our efforts—to positively impact the lives of regional students," says Michael Shelton, executive director of Embracing Our Differences. "Not only do the children explore effective ways to tap into their creativity; they also experience new ways to learn and succeed in the world."

For this year's workshops, Embracing Our Differences has partnered again with the Partners in Education Program of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, as well as with Florida Studio Theatre, YEA Arts (Youth Experiencing Art) and Ringling College of Art and Design.

Under the guidance of Amy MacDonald, a nationally recognized educator from the Partners in Education program of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Writing About Diversity workshop is designed to increase teacher and student participation in Embracing Our Differences' creative writing curriculum and quotation competition. Presented in partnership with the curriculum and instruction department of the Sarasota County school district, YEA Arts and, new this year, Florida Studio Theatre, the workshop takes the difficult and abstract topic of diversity and tolerance and helps students express and create a short powerful quote on the subject. These quotes will focus on diversity and bullying prevention and can be used for submissions to the 2014 Embracing Our Differences Quotation Competition.

**These evening workshops will take place October 1, 2 and 3, at three locations in Sarasota and Manatee counties.** The writing workshops are also broadcast live on the school district's SAFARI Montage system for teachers in Sarasota and Manatee counties who are not able to attend the workshops in person. During her stay, Amy MacDonald will also visit area schools, along with staff members from Florida Studio Theatre. Her visits

will also be broadcast into other classrooms via the SAFARI Montage system.

The Art Teacher Retreat, presented in partnership with the Ringling College of Art and Design, is an intensive two-day retreat intended to reinvigorate educators' teaching practices while inspiring their art and art integration skills. Approximately 30 area teachers will be at Ringling College, October 3 and 4, to participate in the creation of art as they learn new skills and strategies for inspiring their students. All art will be eligible for submission to the 2014 Embracing Our Differences art competition.

"This year's workshops promise to be better than ever," says Michael Shelton. "With more than 25,000 students participating in 2013, Embracing Our Differences continues to be one of the largest education programs in Southwest Florida. The resources we provide to our teachers are a top priority for us."

Embracing Our Differences' annual juried international art exhibit returns to Sarasota's Island Park and Bradenton's Riverwalk, March 30-June 2, 2014; and to North Port High School, May 2-June 2, 2014. **The 2014 Call to Artists and Quotation Writers is open to amateurs, professionals and students until January 6, 2014.** For more information and application forms, visit [www.embracingourdifferences.org](http://www.embracingourdifferences.org).

**In addition to the fall teacher workshops, Embracing Our Differences' other educational programs include:**

- o 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 Aquarium and Ringling Museum.
- o An **annual teacher workshop** designed to provide teachers with a well-planned curriculum for use before, during and after their students' visit to the annual spring exhibit.
- o A **docent program** that, via partnerships with Riverview, Southeast and North Port high schools, provides student-led docent tours of the annual exhibit, with 140 student docents participating in 2013.

*For more information about this exhibit or Embracing Our Differences, please call 941-404-5710 or visit [www.embracingourdifferences.org](http://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, tolerance, acceptance and respect. The mission of Embracing Our Differences is to use the arts as a catalyst for creating awareness and promoting, throughout our community, the value of diversity, the benefits of inclusion and the significance of the active rejection of hatred and prejudice.

- See more at: <http://www.tampabaynewswire.com/2013/09/05/learning-to-teach-diversity-embracing-our-differences-holds-annual-fall-teacher-workshops-14610#sthash.n1iKxRwr.dpuf>