

Downtown bayfront embraces diversity

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I never thought I loved billboards until “Embracing Our Differences” splashed the Sarasota bayfront with colossal art celebrating diversity.

These billboards, with their messages of acceptance, love and self-esteem, were a much-welcome addition to Island Park.

Now in its ninth year, the campaign, which last year attracted 277,000 people, has grown into a major exhibition, drawing submissions from student artists all over the world.

This year more than 4,502 submissions poured in from 53 different countries.

You think Sarasota Film Festival director **Tom Hall** has a tough job? Try choosing 39 entries out of 4,000 submissions.

The exhibit runs April 1 through May 28.

Look for work by students at Lakewood Ranch, Booker and Riverview high schools, as well as Phillippi Shores Elementary, Pine View School and Out-of-Door Academy.

“Where Do You Fit In?” by Phillippi Shores second-graders **Ella Emmett, Dalton Jett, Sara Martin** and **Palmer Mays** should do art teacher **Petie Brown** proud.

Created using paper doll cutouts, the project not only required collaboration, it tackled such meaty topics as bullying, isolation, fun with friends and being different.

To see more EOD art, visit embracingourdifferences.org.