



# Outdoor art exhibit teaches Embracing our Differences

Sarasota outdoor art exhibit, Embracing Our Differences, teaches tolerance and acceptance.

Isabel Mascareñas, WTSP 3:13 p.m. EDT April 1, 2014



Sarasota, Florida -- An outdoor art exhibit in Sarasota paints a message of tolerance that's hard to miss. The Embracing Our Differences exhibit received more than 6,000 entries from across the world.

Set up in groups of three, 39 billboards along Sarasota Bay's Island Park display artwork that stirs the mind and the heart.

One image called, "Am I perfect yet?", captures the attention of 33-year-old Jill Seaman. The photo, by North Port High School students, is of girls holding pictures of Barbie over their faces and their bodies outlined in the shape society says is perfect.

"It's really about finding that beauty within. It's about finding that someone or others to accept us," Seaman says.

Each 12-by-16-foot banner in the [Embracing our Differences Exhibit](#) carries a message of tolerance.

Zachary Widman, 19, points to one image of a young man looking into a mirror called, "No Mirrors No Fears."

"When you look at the mirror you judge yourself. You should live your life the way you want to," Widman says.

Stacey Bloom says the images help teach children including her daughter Phinley to accept more and judge less.

"We should be teaching about celebrating everybody's differences. Then, perhaps, a lot of bullying would dissipate," Bloom says.

Bloom connects with a drawing done by a middle school student from Bradenton. The drawing called "wePhones" depicts a white iPhone and black iPhone holding hands and one screen has a cross, the other a Star of David. The phone's screen reads, "Hug to unlock."

"I think if we hug a little bit more lead to some changes in the world," she says.

Bobbi Lori, with the Embracing our Differences Exhibit, hopes those who see the exhibit walk away with a new appreciation for the power of art.

"I want them to appreciate the fact art can express all the things we need to talk about: to understand people, appreciate differences and accept diversity."

The images go beyond promoting tolerance. The goal is to change the way people think, feel and act.

"Tolerating will not get you anywhere. It's pure allowance and acceptance is the ultimate state of peace and love from one another," says Seaman. "I think everybody wants to be loved. That's what all these signs are saying: you are perfect -- nobody needs to be fixed."

The Embracing Our Differences Exhibit will be on display until June 1. A duplicate of the Sarasota exhibit is also available in Downtown Bradenton's Riverwalk.



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