

## Embracing Our Differences receives grant from Junior League of Sarasota



Kelly Fernandez, Junior League of Sarasota executive vice president; Amy Sankes, JLS president; Sarah Wertheimer, Embracing our Differences executive director; Ashley Najjar, JLS community grants vice chairperson; Laura Mayhew-Purcell, JLS community grants chairperson; and Heather Ferrigno, community council vice president, commemorate a \$3,500 grant from Junior League of Sarasota to Embracing Our Differences. [COURTESY PHOTO]

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### Classroom art project emphasizes importance of diversity, inclusion

The Junior League of Sarasota recently awarded Embracing Our Differences a \$3,500 grant to help fund the organization's Classroom Art Integration Project.

According to Sarah Wertheimer, Embracing Our Differences' executive director, the project offers the opportunity for more than 1,200 elementary school students to engage in critical thinking and visual inquiry.

The initiative also extends leadership opportunities for 125 high school students who will work directly with the students and their teachers.

Wertheimer explained that the Classroom Art Integration Project is an extension of Embracing Our Differences' celebrated high school docent program.

“Our docent program with Riverview High School continues to be the jewel in our crown, with more than 150 students participating this past school year,” she said. “Under the guidance of faculty advisor Dena Sturm, these students serve as guides for thousands of area elementary, middle and high school students who visit Embracing Our Differences' outside exhibit every year — inspiring the younger students to more fully comprehend the messages delivered through the art and quotes.”

For the Classroom Art Integration Project, the student docents will visit Sarasota County elementary schools and engage younger students in conversations about the importance of diversity and inclusion.

The older students will then work with elementary students to create their own works of art inspired by the messages of Embracing Our Differences.

At the end of the session, the high school docents will honor the elementary students with their own “EOD Docent Pin” making each one an honorary docent and showing them that they, too, can be role models and make a difference in their schools and communities.

“We're very grateful to Junior League of Sarasota for recognizing the importance of this project,” said Wertheimer.

— *Submitted by Su Byron*