

State Honors Sarasota, St. Petersburg Arts Groups For Promoting Inclusion, Diversity

By [BETHANY HANSON](#) • JAN 26, 2018



Embracing Our Differences held an outdoor art exhibit for area children at Sarasota's Island Park.

Arts organizations from Sarasota and St. Petersburg were among those honored by the state this week for their work promoting diversity and inclusion.

On Wednesday, the Cultural Arts and Folk Heritage Awards were handed out by the Florida Department of State, highlighting 19 organizations throughout Florida.

Winners included St. Petersburg's Creative Clay, Michael Killoren of the Morean Arts Center, and Suzanne Pomerantzeff of the Academy of Ballet Arts. Two other Sarasota groups also were recognized: the Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe of Florida, Inc. and Embracing Our Differences.

Sarah Wertheimer, associate executive director of Embracing Our Differences, said the arts program teaches diversity to children from kindergarten to 12th grade. An annual art exhibit is a highlight.

“It was a really perfect fit for us,” she said. “We want the children to understand that just because someone doesn’t think like you, talk like you or act like you doesn’t mean that they don’t have value to contribute and doesn’t mean that you can’t have a really valuable relationship.”

The Cultural Arts and Folk Heritage Awards ceremony in Tallahassee also inducted the late Miami artist Purvis Young and Darby country music duo The Bellamy Brothers into the Florida Artists Hall of Fame.

Three people also received Florida Folk Heritage Awards: Jeff Klinkenberg, a longtime journalist at the Tampa Bay Times, the late Pedro Bullaudy - a pioneer in the Tampa Bay area salsa dance scene, and Marshall Davis, Director of the African Heritage Cultural Arts Center in Miami.

There's little doubt that America is becoming more diverse.

Perhaps nowhere is that more evident than in the nation's public schools. But differences can extend beyond race and ethnicity, as students in Sarasota County are learning.

