

Embracing Our Differences receives \$52,000 grant

By **SU BYRON**
GUEST WRITER

The Sarasota County Commission awarded Embracing Our Differences a \$52,082 Tourist Development Cultural/Arts grant to help fund its 2019 exhibition season, which runs Jan. 19 through March 15 in Sarasota's Bayfront Park.

For 15 years, Embracing Our Differences (EOD) has drawn on the passion and perception of artists, children and others to create powerful statements of diversity and acceptance in its annual outdoor public art exhibition consisting of

45 billboard-sized works of art and accompanying quotes.

The scale and impact of this outdoor exhibition has grown and has attracted more than 2.7 million visitors since its inception.

This exhibit is the heart of a year-round program of activities designed to use art as a catalyst to create awareness of and promote diversity.

"This grant will help us continue reaching new audiences outside our immediate area," says Sarah Wertheimer, EOD executive director. Wertheimer said this year's exhibit attracted 202,000 visitors, of which 19.5 percent came

from Florida counties outside of Sarasota County; 21.5 percent were out of state visitors; and two percent were international tourists.

"As an open-air, free exhibit placed in an easy-to-access location, Embracing Our Differences is a natural draw for visitors," says Wertheimer. "In the past 15 years, it's become a top cultural destination for people from around the state and the country. Embracing Our Differences is a



WERTHEIMER

critical component of what defines our region as a sophisticated arts destination."

Wertheimer says that the response to the call for artwork and inspirational quotes for the 2018 exhibit resulted in about 8,000 entries pouring in from 98 countries and 41 states. Students from 227 schools around the world submitted artwork or quotes to the juried exhibit; and 54 of this year's winners were students.

A call for art and quote submissions for the 2019 exhibit is ongoing through Oct. 15.

For more information, visit: Embracing OurDifferences.org.

PUZZLE ANSWERS

Puzzles on pages 22-23

SOLUTION TO TODAY'S 7 LITTLE WORDS

Wednesday's Answers: 1. DRAWS 2. LOVELACE 3. FUMIGATION 4. ADVISOR 5. REINFORCES 6. CLOTTING 7. RIDES

SOLUTION TO TODAY'S JUMBLE

FOYER LINER PADDLE JIGSAW
The inventor of the saddle had the — "RIDE" IDEA

SOLUTION TO TODAY'S CRYPTOQUIP

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHAT WOULD ONE CALL THE CAREER OF BUILDING BRIDGE SUPPORT STRUCTURES? PROFESSIONAL TRESTLING.

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SOLUTION TO TODAY'S CROSSWORD

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Big Brothers Big Sisters receives grants

FROM BIG BROTHERS
BIG SISTERS

Vern and Florence Martin Charitable Trust has awarded \$4,000 to Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Sun Coast (BBSSC) for its School-Based One-to-One mentoring program in Englewood with a focus on the Decisions to Win (DTW) program.

BBSSC helps children realize their potential and build their futures. We nurture children and strengthen communities. For 50 years, Big Brothers Big Sisters has operated under the belief that inherent in every child is the ability to succeed and thrive in life.

BBSSC makes meaningful, monitored matches between adult volunteers ("Bigs") and children ("Littles"), ages 6 through 21, in communities across the Sun Coast. We develop positive relationships that have a direct and lasting effect on the lives of young people.

It may sound obvious, but sometimes the best place to help a child realize their potential is at school. Kids enjoy having their Bigs meet with them there, whether it's in the classroom or on the playground.

Although it takes place at schools, our School-Based Mentoring program isn't limited to the classroom. Of course, some Littles do talk with their Bigs about class, or do homework, or read together, but it's perfectly fine to shoot hoops in the gym or play on the playground.

At the end of the day, it's really all about starting a friendship, providing guidance and inspiring them to reach their potential. In the Decisions to Win program (DTW), an adult mentor from the community works one-to-one with a high school student in this focused, intensive course consisting of an 18-lesson workbook on personal decision-making.

In 2017, 95 percent of seniors completing the Decisions to Win program graduated from high school.

United Way Suncoast has awarded \$50,000 to BBSSC for its Reading Bigs program in Manatee County. This initiative is designed to foster a love of literature and aid in the development of grade-level reading skills for elementary school children at risk of failing Florida's standardized

reading tests.

Reading Bigs improves participants' reading skills through a variety of reading activities that are specific to the child's reading level and are monitored by Big Brothers Big Sisters and the child's teacher to ensure progress.

Knights of Columbus Council 7672 of the St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Grove City, Florida, has donated \$1,000 to BBSSC in honor of Mr. Jim Laurent. Jim, was a Knights of Columbus member as well as a long time Big Brother, a member of the Englewood Community Board and friend to Big Brothers Big Sisters. Jim lost his battle with cancer and is missed by the Englewood community where his legacy lives on.

Wells Fargo has awarded \$22,000 to BBSSC. The funds will be divided up between Sarasota, Manatee and Lee counties. Gateways to Graduation (GTG) and Next Steps to 21 (NS21) will receive \$15,000, and \$7,000 will be used for the Beyond School Walls (BSW) program in Lee county.

Gateways to Graduation serves 8th-12th grade students who

have been identified by school personnel as those at risk of not graduating or not being promoted to the next grade level. Volunteers provide weekly, one-to-one mentoring on each student's school campus, helping the mentored youth to become academically motivated and to develop planning skills and goals.

The NS21 program provides continued guidance to the 10th-12th grade youth it currently serves until they reach age 21, thereby placing them on a career pathway to sustainable independence. This professionally supported mentoring bridge from high school through the early years of post-secondary education or a career provides much-needed guidance as clients navigate their new young adult responsibilities and choices.

In the Beyond School Walls (BSW) program high school students meet with their mentors in a business setting, giving students the opportunity to experience what it means to work for a corporation, learn business etiquette, and identify educational requirements for professional success.

Weekend College offers flexibility for students

STAFF REPORT

State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota (SCF) has created Weekend College to help working or busy adults who want a college degree.

The college has a plan that will allow students to complete an associate in arts degree in two years by taking weekend-only classes.

Weekend College was implemented to allow students to take classes when they want.

Over 500 people responded to a community-wide survey, giving

insights on how Weekend College could provide the balance needed to pursue an education.

Classes are offered Friday night and Saturday and are available in person at SCF Lakewood Ranch, online or a combination of formats. SCF Lakewood Ranch was selected because of its proximity to I-75, offering convenience to residents across the region.

The program offers three terms each year with courses that are eight, 12 or 16 weeks long. Students take three or four classes each term to complete an

associate degree in two years but have the option of taking longer to get their degrees. Anyone who earns an associate in arts degree at SCF can continue in one of SCF's bachelor's degree programs.

Financial aid for Weekend College is available through grants, loans and scholarships.

Weekend College is designed for college-ready working adults who have a high school diploma or GED. Applications are accepted online at SCF.edu/Admissions.

For more information, call the Weekend College coordinator at 941-363-7213.

COMMUNITY NEWS BRIEFS

South Florida Museum camp

Mermaids, manatees, seahorses, South Florida Museum, 201 10th St. W., Bradenton offers kid campers summer activities. Kids entering second through fifth grades in the 2018-2019 school year will explore animals, rocks, and more of the natural world. Weekly camps run through July, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Cost: \$200/week members; \$180 per week for each additional camper in the same

family; \$250/week for non-member campers.

Full camp details and registration at: SouthFloridaMuseum.org.

'Song is Good for the Soul' event

Stonewisdom presents Sister Mary at Venice Holistic Center, 714 Shamrock Blvd., Venice, Saturday, July 14, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Singer, author Mary Stevens, of North Carolina, will hold a sing-a-long evening of gospel, oldies and favorite tunes. The event is family friendly, interactive

and open to the public. Donations appreciated but not necessary. Visit: VeniceHolisticCenter.org.

Volunteer Drivers Needed

ITNSunCoast needs volunteer drivers to provide rides to visually impaired seniors and adults. You can help your neighbors maintain their independence and make a big difference in their lives while helping to keep our community safe. If you have an hour or two every week or so, consider driving for us. Mileage reimbursement and other benefits

are provided. Call 941-364-7530.

BPW meets

The Business & Professional Women of Englewood/Venice invites the public to join its monthly dinner meeting Tuesday, July 17, at 5:15 p.m. for relationship building and dinner at 5:45 p.m., at Left Coast Seafood Co., 385 US 41 Bypass, N., Venice.

Program: Dave Slaman, with Venice Yacht Club's Charitable Foundation, will speak.

Cost: \$23 (door) \$24 (Paypal). To register, visit: BPWEV.org.

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