

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Embracing Our Differences Recognized by Sarasota MLK Celebration Committee With Community Service Award

The award, which was presented at the 32nd annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Breakfast on January 20, recognizes Embracing Our Differences for its work promoting diversity and inclusion throughout the Sarasota-Manatee region.

(Sarasota, Florida) The Sarasota Martin Luther King Celebration Committee honored Embracing Our Differences at its annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Breakfast on January 20 with its 2014 Community Service Award. The award acknowledges Embracing Our Differences' educational outreach programs promoting diversity and inclusion throughout the Sarasota-Manatee region.

For the past 32 years, the Sarasota MLK Celebration Committee has paid tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with a series of commemorative, community service and educational events. Each year, as part of that tribute, the committee honors individuals and groups whose service has had significant impact on the community, while reflecting the spirit of Dr. King. Michael Shelton, executive director of Embracing Our Differences, accepted the award for the organization.

"We're deeply moved to be honored with this recognition," says Shelton. "Dr. King was a champion for all people and his message was simple but powerful. He believed that each of us deserved to be treated equally—no more, no less. That's our mission as well."

Since 2004, downtown Sarasota's Island Park has been the backdrop for Embracing Our Differences' colorful, larger-than-life canvases integrating powerful imagery and thought-provoking messages celebrating diversity. The scale and impact of this outdoor exhibition has continued to grow since its inception. In 2006, a second exhibit debuted in North Port. In 2013, the organization marked its tenth anniversary with an expansion of the exhibit to the Riverwalk in downtown Bradenton.

In addition to the annual outdoor exhibits, Embracing Our Differences' other programs include free bus transportation for area students and teachers to the exhibits and other cultural venues, teacher workshops and retreats designed to provide teachers with diversity curriculums for use throughout the school year, and student docent programs that provide student-led tours of the annual exhibit.

The 2014 exhibitions are set for March 30 to June 2, 2014, for Sarasota's Island Park and Bradenton's Riverwalk. *For more information about this exhibit or Embracing Our Differences, please call 941-323-1010 or visit www.embracingourdifferences.org.*

About Embracing Our Differences

Embracing Our Differences is a project of Coexistence, Inc., a local non-profit that began in 2004. The project showcases a community-based outdoor exhibit promoting positive, inspirational artistic and verbal expressions of inclusion, acceptance and respect. The mission of Embracing Our Differences is to use the arts as a catalyst for creating awareness and promoting, throughout our community, the value of diversity, the benefits of inclusion and the

significance of the active rejection of hatred and prejudice. Since 2004, the Sarasota exhibit has been viewed by more than 1,600,000 visitors. **For more information, visit:**
www.embracingourdifferences.org.

Captions:

- *Michael Shelton receives the Sarasota Martin Luther King Celebration Committee's 2014 Community Service Award for Embracing Our Differences' educational outreach programs promoting diversity and inclusion throughout the Sarasota-Manatee region at the annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Breakfast on January 20, 2014.*
- *A scene from the 2013 Embracing Our Differences exhibit at Bradenton's Riverwalk.*
- *"Siblings," one of the winning artworks in the 2013 Embracing Our Differences exhibit.*