

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 25, 2013

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Embracing Our Differences Receives Tourist Development Cultural/Arts Grant

The \$32,970 grant will help fund the organization's 2014 exhibition season, which runs March 30-June 1, 2014, in Sarasota's Island Park, and May 2-June 1, 2014, at North Port High School.

(Sarasota, FL) The Sarasota County Commission recently awarded Embracing Our Differences a \$32,970 Tourist Development Cultural/Arts grant to help fund its 2014 exhibition season, which runs March 30-June 1, 2014, in Sarasota's Island Park, and May 2-June 1, 2014, at North Port High School. Since 2004, Embracing Our Differences' annual juried art exhibit has graced downtown Sarasota's bayfront with billboard-sized images created by artists, writers and students from around the world reflecting their interpretation of the message, "enriching lives through diversity."

"This TDC grant will empower us to continue reaching out to audiences beyond Sarasota County," says Michael Shelton, the executive director of Embracing Our Differences. According to Shelton, this year's Sarasota exhibits, which closed on June 2, attracted 253,000 visitors of which 21.8 percent came from counties in Florida outside of Sarasota County; 20.5 percent were visitors from out of state; and 6.5 percent were international tourists.

“Embracing Our Differences is a vital part of Sarasota’s rich cultural tapestry and has consistently drawn its fair share of tourists during the past 10 years,” notes Shelton. “As an open-air, free exhibit placed in easy-to-access locations, it’s a natural draw for visitors. We’re proud that it’s become a critical component of what defines our region as an important arts destination.”

In 2013, Embracing Our Differences received 4,419 total artworks and uplifting statements from people representing 52 countries and 41 states. Students from 128 elementary, junior and high schools comprised 60 percent of those submitting. A call for art and quote submissions is ongoing now through January 6, 2014. For more information about this and Embracing Our Differences, visit www.embracingourdifferences.org.

For more information about this exhibit or Embracing Our Differences, 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.