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January 10, 2014

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Embracing Our Differences Receives “One World Award” From Sarasota Sister Cities Association

The award honors a remarkable Sarasota organization that has enhanced world understanding and respect through extraordinary work or volunteer service.

(Sarasota, FL) Michael Shelton, executive director of Embracing Our Differences (EOD), announced that the Sarasota Sister Cities Association selected his organization to receive its prestigious 2014 One World Award. EOD will be honored at the One World Gala on March 16 at Michael's on East in Sarasota.

“This award recognizes Embracing Our Differences for its outstanding work creating awareness in more than 50 countries around the world,” noted Bill Wallace, the One World Gala co-chair. “It’s an affirmation that we are indeed one—our brother’s brother and sister’s sister.”

Wallace added that Embracing Our Differences and Sarasota Sister Cities Association share a common mission. He defined it as creating, “face-to-face exchanges among the people of the world...with the goal of increasing understanding of how others live their daily lives, developing a deeper respect for others, and working towards the day we can all to put down our weapons and embrace peace.”

Shelton explained that EOD’s annual outdoor international art exhibit employs art to spark discussions and promote peaceful coexistence. The 2013 exhibit drew 4,419

submissions representing 52 countries with a total of 22,017 submissions received from 64 countries since 2005. “We’re making a difference,” he says. “The One World Award is a recognition of that. It’s a formidable honor and we’re deeply grateful.”

Shelton adds that, “Diversity and respect are essential to 21st-century life on our planet. Embracing Our Differences exists to promote this understanding. Accepting diversity is not a challenge to national and cultural identity; mutual respect for others is the only way to assure one’s own identity. EOD is getting that message out there through its many programs. We’re building strong bonds of understanding and respect among people everywhere. We’re encouraging them to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that accepting other people, with all of their differences, will lead to a better world for everyone.”

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 Riverwalk in downtown Bradenton. **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 Embracing Our Differences, call 941-404-5710 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 1,350,000 visitors.

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