

MEDIA CONTACTS

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Rotary Club of Sarasota Foundation Awards Grant to Embracing Our Differences for its Outstanding Education Initiatives

The \$5,000 grant will help fund the organization's educational outreach programs and initiatives.

(Sarasota, FL) The Rotary Club of Sarasota Foundation recently awarded Embracing Our Differences a \$5,000 grant to help fund and enhance its education outreach initiatives.

Since 2004, EOD's outdoor art exhibit, celebrating the theme of "enriching lives through diversity," showcases the art and words of thousands of artists and writers from around the world, including hundreds of area-based students and educators. Also crucial to the organization's mission are its ongoing education initiatives. Presented in partnership with the regional school district and nationally recognized educators, these programs positively impact the lives of thousands of area teachers and students every year. These include annual workshops and retreats providing diversity curricula for area educators, free bus transportation for students and teachers to visit area cultural venues, and student docent programs in high schools. With more than 780 teachers and 37,000 students participating in these programs last year, Embracing Our Differences continues to lead as one of the largest education programs in southwest Florida.

"We're grateful to the Rotary Club of Sarasota Foundation for its commitment to providing resources to create an environment in which educators recognize that a healthy respect for diversity and inclusion is the cornerstone of any progressive society," says

Sarah [Wertheimer](#), Embracing Our Differences' associate executive director. "The resources we provide to our teachers and students are a top priority for us. This grant will help us provide more teachers with the best practices necessary to create safe environments that inspire our youth to develop a sense of identity and confidence, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, color or religion."

Embracing Our Differences' annual juried international art exhibit returns to Sarasota's Island Park, April 1 to May 31. *For more information about Embracing Our Differences, call 941-404-5710 or visit www.embracingourdifferences.org.*

Aside from the annual outdoor exhibition, Embracing Our Differences' educator workshops are presented to approximately 200 teachers who are responsible for more than 20,000 students.

- **Mastering the Art of the Quote Workshops:** This workshop is designed to take the difficult topics of diversity, prejudice and inclusion and teach students to express themselves through critical thinking and creative writing. Presented in partnership with Florida Studio Theatre, the workshop fulfills a critical need of providing teachers with creative resources to meet Florida's Language Arts Standards.
- **Art Teacher Retreat:** This two-day seminar, developed in partnership with Ringling College of Art and Design, is designed to reinvigorate educators' teaching practices while offering new skills and strategies for inspiring students to explore the abstract concepts of prejudice, diversity and inclusion. Substitute teachers are provided for participating educators. **In 2016, the 30 participating art teachers were collectively responsible for more than 9,000 students from Sarasota and Manatee counties.**
- **Lesson Plans Workshops:** Designed to deliver new and innovative methods of engaging students in critical thinking while creating the perfect environment for a rich discussion of the value of diversity and inclusion, all lesson plans identify the relevant curriculum standards, educational objectives, materials

needed, activities, step-by-step instructional strategies and assessment guidelines.

- **Summer Diversity Institute:** This three-day annual workshop provides information and support for the creation of a respectful and civil classroom culture, while offering tools and structures for educators and guidance counselors to use with students in their classrooms and on the school campus. Participants work individually and in small groups based upon grade level, as well as school location, to create lesson plans and action plans that will be used within each school to provide support to both students and faculty. **48 participants from 11 schools took part in the 2016 workshop.**

Other programs include:

- The "**Make-a-Day-of-It!**" program, providing free bus transportation for area students and teachers to the outdoor exhibit and to other cultural venues, including Florida Studio Theatre, Mote Marine Laboratory, Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, The Ringling, Sarasota Film Festival, and Marie Selby Botanical Gardens. **12,469 students participated during the 2016 school year.**
- **Coexistence Clubs**, via partnerships with Riverview, Booker and North Port high schools, provide student-led docent tours of the annual exhibit. **Student docent tours were provided to 6,820 K-8 children visiting the 2016 exhibit. There are approximately 145 student docents.**

About Embracing Our Differences

Embracing Our Differences is a not-for-profit organization that uses the transformational power of art and education to celebrate and promote the diversity of the human family. It accomplishes this through an annual, large-scale outdoor juried art exhibition and a comprehensive series of educational initiatives, programs and resources designed for teachers and students. Visit www.embracingourdifferences.org.