



# Embracing Our Differences – Long Island

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Suffolk Center on the Holocaust, Diversity & Human Understanding, Inc. 631-451-4700 chdhu@sunysuffolk.edu



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## Kick Off Briefing

Hosted by the Honorable Frank Petrone, Town of Huntington Supervisor, and Dr. Shirley R. Pippins, President of Suffolk County Community College (SCCC), June 20<sup>th</sup>'s informational briefing explained the *Embracing Our Differences* project and included a preview of the art work submitted for the competition portion of the program. Guests were entertained by *Ballet Long Island's* Multicultural Celebration dance performance (photo below).

The *Embracing Our Differences – Long Island (EOD-LI)* project is a first for our region. Its objective is to build a better community by reinforcing values that respect human dignity and foster freedom. The project consists of a dynamic

outdoor art exhibit complemented by a variety of locally sponsored activities that will be carried out during the month of October 2007.

EOD-LI is modeled after a project initiated in Sarasota, Fl. Richard Bergman, who produced the *Embracing Our Differences* project in Florida, spoke at the briefing and told the audience that "in Sarasota, our experience has been that *Embracing our Differences* truly changes the way children and adults think about other people."

CHDHU Chair, Dr. M. Vicki Wacksman, who has visited the Sarasota exhibition, believes it will "provide our government, businesses, schools, civic and religious

organizations a great opportunity to promote goals for diversity and provide residents life-changing benefits to grow socially and culturally."

The juried art exhibition, , will take place in Huntington's Heckscher Park. The art itself consists of billboard-siz (16' x 12') panels. This central attraction is designed to provoke public discussion and encourage understanding and acceptance of difference. As Supervisor Petrone stated, "It is unfortunate, but undeniable, that Long Island needs to do more to address the prejudice that persists in our society. The Town of Huntington is proud to be affiliated with the *Embracing Our Differences* project and the hope that it holds for the future."



## Partnering Organizations

## Information

*Ballet Long Island**Cinema Arts Centre**Council for Prejudice Reduction**Greater Port Jefferson-Northern Brookhaven Arts Council**Hallockville Museum**Heckscher Museum of Art**Long Island Museum**Long Island Philharmonic**North Shore business and Professional Women's Clubs**Suffolk County Human Rights Commission**Comsewogue Public Library**Emma Clark Public Library**Half Hollow Hills Community Library**Long Beach Public Library**Smithtown Public Library**South Country Public Library**Syosset Public Library**Dowling College**St. Joseph's College**Wang Center, Stony Brook University**Southold United Methodist Church**Wyandanch Union Free School District*

## Sponsorship Opportunities

The Development Committee, chaired by Andrew Liput, is seeking donations and sponsorships to support the event and ensure the ability to continue offering *Embracing Our Differences* in future years. Sponsors will receive considerable public recognition in program literature and at

the exhibition site. The art exhibition is expected to attract several hundred thousand visitors. Opportunities also exist for sponsors to exhibit one of the winning works of art at a location of their choosing following the close of the show. A 2008 calendar, which will also be created from the art work and sold

widely, will credit our sponsors.

This is certainly an event worthy of support on its own merits. We would welcome referrals to persons and organizations who share our interest in human rights.

## Partnerships Invited

The *Embracing Our Differences* Project offers the prospect of tying together the community of not-for-profit, faith-based, governmental and other entities engaged in the effort to build a better community by strengthening values that respect human dignity and celebrate diversity.

We cannot do this work on

our own and we recognize that throughout the year many efforts are in progress that parallel our work. We invite community organizations, youth groups, arts councils, places of worship, educational entities, business and government to participate by offering their own activity that reinforces our theme and sends a message of a community unified in its

support of coexistence.

The organizations listed in the left margin have already committed to offering programming during October and many more are expected to join us either formally or in spirit. Together we hope to achieve a critical mass of activity that will reach into every home and workplace on Long Island, with a lasting effect and benefit.

## Art Competition

Submissions have been received from professional, amateur and student artists. The panel of judges will be selecting from the 180 works submitted.

The panel consists of Erik Neil, Executive Director of the Heckscher Museum of Art, Bob Carter, professional artist and Professor of Art at Nassau Community College, and Sunita Mukhi,

performance artist and Executive Director of the Wang Center at Stony Brook University.

The winning entries will be enlarged to 16' x 12' and displayed in Heckscher Park, Huntington from September 26 to October 24. A calendar will also be created from the chosen entries.

While the exhibition of the art work is an important part of our effort, the process of developing the art work also proved to be a worthwhile teaching activity. As Grace Barrett, Commack Middle School teacher put it, the creation of the art work was preceded by a discussion of "how an artist might use symbolism to illustrate *alienation and losing and/or lack of identity.*"