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For immediate release

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ArtCenter Manatee Receives Mini-Grant from the Tampa Bay Estuary Program

BRADENTON, Fla. December 6, 2016 – ArtCenter Manatee, located in the Manatee River Watershed (part of the Tampa Bay Estuary), received a mini-grant from the Tampa Bay Estuary Program to landscape portions of our property using Florida native plants.

Tampa Bay is Florida's largest open-water estuary, home to an incomparable variety of fish and wildlife, a rich tapestry of habitats from seagrass meadows to salt marshes, and nearly 3 million people who benefit economically and aesthetically from the Bay's bounty.

Native landscaping will help to protect our environment, reducing water usage and run-off, while beautifying our property. Updated landscaping will also help to provide an attractive and welcoming environment for our customers and those who pass by our facility every day. It will further enhance the visual appeal of downtown Bradenton by offering an attractive focal point to the many people who drive by every day, both residents and visitors, as well as to those who walk by on their way to and from Riverwalk.

ArtCenter Manatee proudly partnered with a number of local groups on this project, including: The University of Florida Extension Office, who provided soil testing and recommended native plants that would complement our existing planting, Rotary Club of East Manatee Eco Club, whose President, Annette Zang provided an educational component teaching participants about the importance and interconnectedness of our waterways and watershed areas, students from the Bradenton Kiwanis Key Club, along with ArtCenter volunteers. This group of about 15 volunteers turned soil, planted and applied bags and bags of mulch.

In Manatee County, the Manatee River is important for many reason, most directly, it is the source of our drinking water so protecting it impacts all of us. When you consider that the size of the Tampa Bay Estuary is 400 square miles of open water, with a 2,200-square-mile drainage basin and that it is the home to over 200,000 birds, over 200 fish species and some of the most productive agricultural land in the state, you begin to understand the significance of protecting it. After decades of decline, Tampa Bay has made a remarkable comeback in recent years, with impressive gains in water quality, seagrass recovery and fish and wildlife populations.

The project was completed Saturday, December 3rd. We invite you to stop by and admire the work of our partners and learn more about protecting our waterways.

We are most grateful to the Tampa Bay Estuary Program for their support.

Pictures Attached

About the Tampa Bay Estuary Program

The mission of the Tampa Bay Estuary Program is to build partnerships to restore and protect Tampa Bay through implementation of a scientifically sound, community-based management plan. The Tampa Bay Estuary Program was created by Congress in 1991 to assist the community in restoring and protecting Florida's largest open-water estuary. As a designated "estuary of national significance," Tampa Bay is the economic and environmental centerpiece of a rapidly growing region supporting more than 2.3 million people.

The Tampa Bay Estuary Program (TBEP) is a partnership of local governments and state and federal environmental agencies that was formed in 1990 to develop a conservation and management plan for Tampa Bay. In addition to conducting research and implementing strategies for bay restoration, TBEP also develops programs to educate citizens about ways to prevent water pollution and protect Tampa Bay.

The Bay Mini-Grants program is financed by annual sales of the Tampa Bay Estuary specialty license plate, also known as the "tarpon tag." It supports community-based restoration and education projects focusing on the Tampa Bay Estuary. Empowering citizens through programs such as this helps foster an environmental ethic and promote community stewardship of the bay.

About ArtCenter Manatee

Located in downtown Bradenton, Florida, ArtCenter Manatee is the premier center for art, art education and unique gifts in Manatee County. The nearly 10,000 sq. ft. building in downtown Bradenton features three galleries, five classrooms, an Artists' Market gift shop and an art library featuring over 3,000 art volumes.

Over 350 day, evening and weekend art classes for adults and children are offered year round in painting, drawing, pastels, pottery, jewelry design, photography and more.

The Artists' Market features unique, affordable gifts by local and national artists. Exhibitions in the galleries change monthly and showcase local, regional and national artists.



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