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## Seahorses and mermaids appear around Venice



GONDOLIER PHOTOS BY MORGAN SIMPSON

Englewood residents Gail DeCoste and Dennis Reilly pose with a mermaid from the FantaSea project.

### Venice Art Center places 52 sculptures around town

By MORGAN SIMPSON  
STAFF WRITER

VENICE — Uniquely designed seahorses and mermaids are scattered around Venice as the Venice Art Center released its FantaSea Venice project.

"It makes it fun," Marie Bowers said about seeing the art downtown while shopping. Residents and visitors can spot 52 seahorses and mermaids around the downtown area and a few other locations around Venice until they are taken off the streets in April 2023.

"We made it a point we wanted to see them," Leslie Brish said while shopping in Venice.

The VAC introduced the sea creatures as the third public art project that has been completed in the past 15 years.

With over 50 sculptures, it will be the largest art installation project the VAC has done.

Previous art installations included "Pigs in Paradise" and "Sea Venice."

The FantaSea committee started planning two years ago and matched local artists with sponsors.

Mary Moscatelli, the committee chair for the project, believes this project is bigger than previous years with more sculptures, merchandising opportunities and technological advantages to display information about the project.

"I think the community is really engaged with this one," Moscatelli said.

After hours of hard work from the artists, the sculptures are almost all out for the public to see.

"People were ready for something bright, colorful and artistic to happen downtown," Moscatelli said about the project coming out amidst the pandemic.

The FantaSea committee wanted to focus on the sculptures being downtown to draw people into the shops and restaurants, especially visitors on day trips.

"For us, it's a way to give back to our downtown community, too," Moscatelli said.

She also believes the sculptures being downtown enhance the flowers provided by Venice Area

A decorated seahorse off of Venice Avenue.



"People were ready for something bright, colorful and artistic to happen downtown," FantaSea committee chair Mary Moscatelli said.

A mermaid sponsored by Sunbug and Twist Boutique placed in front of the Sunbug store on Venice Avenue.



Visitor Csilla Lyerly from Texas poses for a picture with one of the FantaSea seahorses downtown.



FantaSea committee chair Mary Moscatelli and committee co-chair Lynn Fields pose with seahorses ready to hit the streets.



Beautification Inc.

While some are placed outside of the downtown area, the committee wanted to keep most within walking distance of Venice Avenue.

With the prime location, many residents and visitors can be seen taking selfies with the sculptures already placed along Venice Avenue.

"I was dying to see it," said Gail DeCoste of Englewood. "They are so cool."

Visitor Csilla Lyerly, from Texas, said it was a complete surprise the sculptures were around downtown.

Lyerly was visiting Venice for the day with her family and stumbled upon the art.

"I personally love seahorses," Lyerly said.

Moscatelli hopes the art will attract neighboring areas to "make a fun day of it," while shopping and eating at the restaurants.

For more information about the FantaSea project, visit: [FantaSeaVenice.com](http://FantaSeaVenice.com)



A child hugs a FantaSea mermaid sculpture as others crowd around to admire it.