

MAILBOXES

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hope that postal workers lives will be made a little easier, Ms. Murray is challenging Lee County to an Extreme Mailbox Contest. Participants must provide a before and after picture of the box, showing how they went from a crummy receptacle (or just average) to something that not only complies with postal regulations, but delivers notes of creativity, style or even artistry.



Murray

Winners will be on display in local post offices and receive two sheets of stamps featuring their box.

"A lot of times we see boxes in poor condition, like the doors are falling off the front

or don't close properly," Ms. Murray said. "Sometimes you see boxes that are kind of leaning and falling over. If boxes are in real bad condition, they get rusty inside and when the carriers stick the mail in the box, they get rust under their fingernails."

Some workers had to get tetanus shots. And getting stung by wasps is also a problem, she added, especially around this time of year.

Those issues are easily corrected by standard maintenance. Some mailbox artists take it a step further, by producing their own Sistine Chapels on the postal services receptacles. Southwest Florida's tradition of kitsch art, like oversized dolphins and manatees, is also popular.

Sergio Alfaro, who sells plants on Buckingham Road, uses his to attract business. The box is painted pink, has his company's name, "Elata Florida Landscape Natives," and has a lizard for



ALL PHOTOS EVAN WILLIAMS/FLORIDA WEEKLY
A manatee on Fort Myers Beach.



Nautical theme on Fort Myers Beach.



A gator in Buckingham.



Chains in Fort Myers Shores.

the flag. It's also clean and easy to reach from the road.

"My wife set it like that so it's something nice to see," he said.

One box in Fort Myers Shores is supported by a fiberglass sculpture of a sea horse. It was produced by a company in Bradenton

Mail box rules, requests and guidelines

- >>Install mailboxes at a height of 41 to 45 inches from the ground to the bottom of the box
- >>Mailboxes must be on the right hand side of the road
- >>Mailboxes should be set back 6 to 8 inches from the edge of the road or the curb
- >>Mailboxes should be on a structure that is stable, but could bend or fall away if struck by a vehicle. Generally, supports should be 4-inch by 4-inch wooden posts, or 2 inches around if made of metal and buried 24 inches deep.
- >>Your address should be easily visible on both sides of your mailbox
- >>Don't leave any sharp points around the mailbox that hands could get cut on
- >>Please spray for bugs around your box
- >>Don't park your car so close to the box that mail carriers have to back up to get there

Source: Anne Murray, postmaster, Fort Myers/Cape Coral

called Custom Design Mailboxes.

"Our customers come from all over," said owner Judy Dahl. Her husband, Richard, makes the mailbox statues. "We ship them all over the world, to seven countries. We have quite a few down in Cape Coral, Fort Myers Beach and Naples."

She said the dolphin is the most popular, followed by the manatee and the seahorse. They also make a golf bag. The most elaborate design they make is a lobster.

Ms. Murray said that even if your mailbox isn't a beautiful work of art, her main concern is keeping the boxes up to regulation for her 600 mail carriers. (She is also speaking on behalf of other mail carriers on Fort Myers Beach, Lehigh Acres or Buckingham).

"I think creativeness is good, but we really go for safety and staying within the regulations," Ms. Murray said. ■



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