



2017

Annual Report

Building Communities | Making America Bloom



Our Vision & Mission

Making America Bloom



Brewton, AL

Our Vision:

America in Bloom envisions communities across the country as welcoming and vibrant places to live, work, and play – benefiting from colorful plants and trees; enjoying clean environments; celebrating heritage; and planting pride through volunteerism.

Our Mission:

America in Bloom's mission is to promote nationwide beautification through education and community involvement by encouraging the use of flowers, plants, trees, and other environmental and lifestyle enhancements.

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North Beach, MD

Dear Friends and Supporters,

2017 was an important transitional year for America in Bloom. After 17 years of generous support from AmericanHort for the overall management of America in Bloom, we set up a new management structure with Laura Kunkle of Second Wind Management LLC as our Executive Director and CEO. Yes, she is the same Laura Kunkle who served us since the very beginning of America in Bloom as a member of OFA then the AmericanHort staff. We feel so very fortunate to have her wise, dedicated and enthusiastic leadership in place as we move to the next decade of America in Bloom.

We are proud that our existing programs – the National Awards Program, the annual Educational Symposium, the CN EcoConnexions grant program – continue to provide value to communities across the country. Each year we ask for feedback in two different surveys. We are pleased to have received high marks on each of our programs.

- The National Awards Program has sustained its strength as our core program reaching 40 communities this year. Thousands of residents in each of these communities – many of them volunteer leaders – have transformed where they live into a place they love. By focusing on the 6 America in Bloom criteria – Floral Displays, Urban Forestry, Landscaped Areas, Heritage Preservation, Environmental Efforts, and Overall Impression – they have improved the quality of life and enhanced the economic vitality of their communities.
- Our team of 22 professional judges offered their time pro bono to visit each of our communities to discover the remarkable ways in which they have “planted pride.” Our judges provided more than 6,700 volunteer hours to the national awards program in 2017. These AIB Judges stay involved with their communities encouraging them throughout the year.
- Our annual AIB educational Symposium in Holliston, Massachusetts brought together more than 200 leaders from 85 communities across America and provided best ideas and inspiration for new programs and projects. Thirty sponsors from around the country generously supported our AIB community leaders at this Symposium. The new and improved “Best Ideas Annual” offered an excellent collection of best ideas from our 2017 AIB communities – adding to a valuable resource for communities everywhere.
- Our unique partnership with CN Railroad delivered generous grants in 2017 of \$20,000 through their EcoConnexions From the Ground Up grants program to 10 communities situated along the CN Railroad lines in the United States. America in Bloom is honored to manage this program.

Organizationally, we hit some major milestones financially. We ended the year with nearly \$10K to the positive. In addition, each of the major programs – the National Awards Program, the Annual Educational Symposium and the CN EcoConnexions program – showed a profit. We are so thankful for the many generous sponsors and donors as well as those who have helped make our auctions and programs successful. We are also indebted to the exceptional leaders of our Board committees who have found numerous win-win strategies that have helped us reduce expenses while improving our programs. We are so fortunate that these leaders and many others have come forward with their professional expertise, precious time, and leadership experience to bring us to new heights in what we can offer communities and community leaders across America.

Moving forward, we have challenged ourselves with envisioning a bolder future for America in Bloom. After a successful strategic planning workshop early the year, we set forth some ambitious challenges. I am pleased to report that we are making great progress on this path to our future. We have challenged ourselves to find new lines of revenue while looking for strategies to reduce expenses. We have set ourselves a bold task of creating a new entry level program that would bring significantly more communities into the AIB family. We have enlisted professional expertise to revise our National Awards evaluation to make it more objective and of more value to our AIB communities.

This 2017 Annual Report offers insight into the impact America in Bloom has had and continues to have on communities across America. It demonstrates the efforts being made to benefit these communities with enhanced quality of life, sustained economic vitality, and pride in the overall beauty and uniqueness of their communities. For those of you who help us in these efforts – AIB Board members, AIB judges, AIB community leaders, AIB sponsors and donors – we cannot thank you enough. Thank you!

This year I pass the gavel of the AIB Presidency to Mayor John Manchester with great confidence that he will lead AIB to a bold and bright future.



Katy Moss Warner, President
AIB Board of Directors

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America in Bloom by the Numbers

Making America Bloom

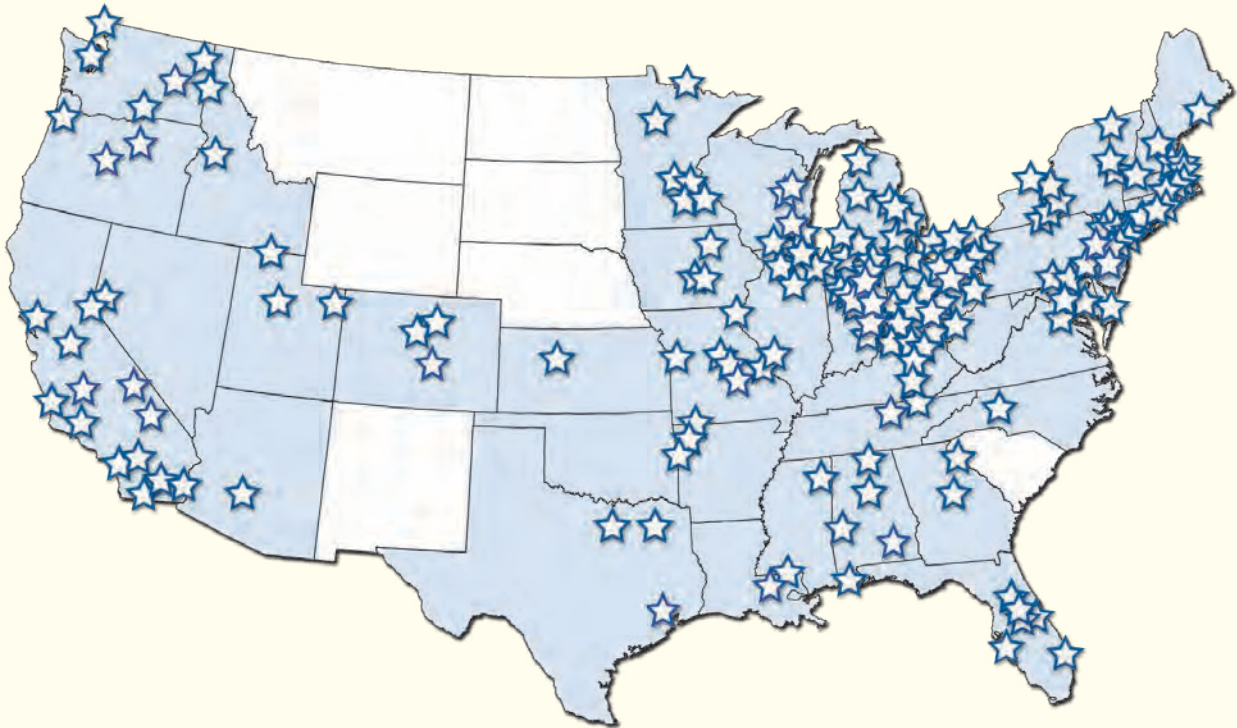
253 communities in 40 states since 2001

1,058 individual judging visits by 103 judges

More than 23 million lives touched

More than 300 million media impressions

More than 65,000 volunteer hours visiting communities,
writing evaluations, and supporting AIB towns and cities.





Community Transformations

Making America Bloom

Belpre in Bloom: Making Beauty a Priority

By Lisa Collins

Belpre, Ohio, has always claimed the name "Beautiful Prairie;" however, it's only lately we've reclaimed the spirit of our name. America in Bloom has given us the impetus to make beauty a priority, and our town has come together because of that effort.

Belpre is unique in that we don't have a downtown. We have two primary business streets, but no "hub" with charming old buildings or a town square. We have a strip center anchored by a big box store, a handful of fast food restaurants, and a lot of small, nondescript buildings. That has made it difficult to create a sense of community and to identify a particular place to beautify – until America in Bloom was introduced.



We began with a small committee that planted flowers. We chose the color pink, asked our neighbors to plant pink, and started promoting the idea of Belpre in Bloom. That effort took off quickly and turned into a much larger group of interested citizens. We chose a Miss Belpre in Bloom from our only elementary school, which brought the idea to kids immediately. We included every girl who participated in the pageant as part of the "court," which involved parents and grandparents of 10 little girls and their peers. We put them in parades on Belpre in Bloom floats and cars. The movement started to take off.

Scouts were invited to create projects around the beautification of our town, and school art teachers jumped on the idea,

creating public art pieces covered in flowers. Kids painted tires for planters, and fire hydrants with posies, and Bloom banners were sponsored throughout town. Hanging baskets and giant flower pots were added in strategic places, most noticeably at our riverfront park, and people in neighboring



towns began to take notice. A large-scale flower mural on a plain bathroom building in the park drew media attention. A greenhouse sprung up at the high school, where students planted flowers and even grew fresh salad to be used in their school cafeteria. And the beauty continued to spread.

We joined forces with the town's tree commission, and started planting, pruning, and preserving trees. Entrances to the city



have been identified and enhanced, and Welcome to Belpre in Bloom has become a common sight. Suddenly, we aren't just the sleepy little bedroom community next to a larger city. We are living up to our name, the Beautiful Prairie.

Volunteers can be seen regularly keeping public areas planted and weeded. Our award-winning America in Bloom status has been the vehicle we needed to transform an aging little town with no real identity, to one that is indeed, a beautiful prairie, and a community constantly abuzz with activity as it continues to bloom.



Lewisburg, West Virginia: From Good to Great

By John Manchester,
Lewisburg Mayor
and AIB Board Member

Before our involvement with America in Bloom, Lewisburg already had in place a lot of the pieces emphasized by AIB. We had a well preserved downtown historic district, lots of floral displays and several environmental initiatives. However, the entities responsible for these important pieces of downtown revitalization had no idea what the other groups were doing, and many times had no idea that the other groups even existed. AIB provided the cohesive framework to draw all the volunteer, civic and governmental organizations into the same room to better coordinate the beautification efforts and to designate a group project for the upcoming year that everyone could work on and take pride in accomplishing.



For example, our first pair of judges noticed that an old cemetery, prominently located in the midst of our historic district, was badly in need of repair and maintenance. This cemetery was primarily a burial ground for black slaves from our area. Everyone in town knew the cemetery looked awful, but no one had ever stepped up to say, "I will fix it." When the local members of our AIB group (now known as Lewisburg in Bloom - LIB) assembled to go over the judges' report, all agreed that the situation at the cemetery was a real problem and organized to upgrade the cemetery. With the backing of Lewisburg in Bloom, local LIB organizer Shannon Beatty made presentations throughout the community about AIB and the importance of revitalizing Lewisburg and this neglected cemetery. Money was raised, the cemetery was cleaned, and plans were made to index the graves and regrade the site. Without AIB providing the fresh set of eyes to point out this problem in our midst, I expect that cemetery would have deteriorated even



more rather than serve as an asset within the historic district.

New LIB initiatives in town have helped bring together people, added color and focused greater attention on our downtown. For example, after LIB was formed, the committee promoted the idea of a unified color scheme which has helped achieve a unified look not only in the downtown area but all over town as well. LIB has even revived an abandoned tradition of the Tree Lighting downtown. The Tree Lighting ceremony has been a great success drawing just over 100 people during the first year. Each year the crowd grows. Caroling, cookies and hot chocolate are shared in the Center Green Space.

Our participation in AIB has given our community a renewed sense of pride in our downtown. A sense that our community was "pretty good" has been replaced by a sense of our community being "great." Small improvements like



more floral displays and splashes of color have led to more merchants and homeowners stepping up their efforts to beautify their properties.

Our community is still recovering from the 2016 flood event that took so many lives and destroyed so much property in surrounding towns and areas of our county. In the aftermath of such a disaster our communities have supported each other as never before. However, our local economy has struggled to regain



its earlier strength. Our participation in AIB has allowed us to enhance the beauty of our downtown and showcase our amenities to visitors to help our recovery and to maintain our pride and appreciation in what we have.

Madisonville, Kentucky: A Story of Transformation

By Barbara Vincentsen,
AIB Judge

Madisonville, Kentucky is a city rich in assets with acres of prime parkland offering outstanding recreational opportunities, a low cost of living, exceptional health care, and more. As the county seat of Hopkins County, Kentucky, the city also benefits from legal and governmental job opportunities. Despite these advantages, however, downtown Madisonville entered the lean economic years beginning in 2008 in a weakened condition which was threatening to get worse. This was most apparent in the downtown shopping area which included more than 17 vacant





storefronts and offered little to entice residents to shop or dine in town.

But change was afoot in the city. In 2007, through a grant from the state, the city had acquired a new City Hall. Also, the county was preparing to build a large new county courthouse in the downtown area. Unfortunately, budget overruns mandated that the landscape plans for this project be shelved, promising a rather stark aesthetic. A group of civic minded individuals decided that a plan was needed to create a friendlier, more inviting environment at the human scale for the downtown.

In 2011, Madisonville joined America in Bloom. Under this umbrella initial volunteer efforts to improve the streetscape included the installation of both hanging floral baskets and public art displays. Some building owners volunteered to paint storefronts to rejuvenate the downtown in the weeks leading to the arrival of the AIB judges. The first year's AIB score was not impressive, but the judges' suggestions for the city were. Invigorated, more volunteers joined the AIB effort and the improvements began to take hold.

A portion of the downtown was deliberately targeted as an area for public gatherings and beautification efforts continued. In an effort to bring more people downtown, live

music concerts were initiated and quickly became very popular. Foot traffic in the downtown area intensified. Through efforts of the Chamber of Commerce and local businesses, some of the vacant storefronts began to fill with

restaurants and local retail shops. Soon, a bank took over the vacant old municipal building and, in response to the growing popularity of the downtown as a gathering space, a public/private effort was initiated to create a beautiful downtown community park in the green area in front of the bank. Today, this park includes a permanent stage, greenspace, and art and floral displays and is home to numerous events including the live outdoor music concerts.

All these efforts over the years have proved contagious, with people noting the clear visual difference between "then" and "now," and many people saying, "I stay in town now." Jenny Gibson, a downtown advocate and active volunteer said it all in a quote about the improvements for Madisonville as a direct result of involvement in AIB: "Sure! It's been pretty dramatic. Off the top of my



head, I can only think of 7 vacant buildings (one of which is being worked on and that number includes the old Bart's building and Blackwells, which we have prospects for). In 2011 I can think of at least 17 vacancies. The occupants have consistently changed from primarily law and government office to small retail, food service, and personal services, which is necessary for the district to thrive. AIB involvement has helped us focus on building an environment suitable for growth. The other side of the success has been the more recent businesses' understanding that together we are stronger than alone. In other words, we work together and help each other to succeed!"





Corporate Partnerships

Making America Bloom



America in Bloom is proud to continue its partnership with CN's banner program entitled From the Ground Up which provides funding of up to \$25,000 for the greening of America in Bloom communities along its rail lines in the U.S. Projects address local issues and provide a means for engagement at the local level since local community groups and service clubs will join AIB in support of the projects. The projects also address concerns related to water conservation, naturalization, stewardship and environmentally friendly transportation. As one of North America's leading railroads, CN's network extends to three North American coasts, passing through a wide range of urban and rural communities. As part of the CN EcoConnexions From the Ground Up program, CN is encouraging communities along the CN corridor to take environmental action by improving their communities through natural landscaping, groundcover improvement, floral displays, and healthy urban forests.





CN EcoConnexions Grant Recipients

Making America Bloom






Holliston, MA



Education

Making America Bloom


History. Horticulture. Holliston.
America in Bloom Symposium & Awards Celebration
October 5-7, 2017
Holliston, Massachusetts
www.AmericanBloom.org

Symposium & Awards Celebration

The 2017 America in Bloom Symposium was held in Holliston, Massachusetts, a 5-bloom AIB community steeped in rich New England traditions. We offered strong educational sessions with dynamic speakers, outstanding networking and idea-sharing opportunities, and learning tours that provided take-home solutions that attendees can implement in their own communities. Pre-symposium events included an East Coast Garden Tour that allowed attendees to experience horticultural heritage in the Boston area, and an opportunity to visit the Urban Farming Institute whose mission is to develop and promote urban farming as a commercial sector within the city and to create green collar jobs for residents.

We continue to have strong interest from communities to host the symposium in future years. Each location promises exciting venues that showcase the power of working within the America in Bloom framework to create great communities of all sizes.

Save the Date: 2018 America in Bloom Symposium & Awards Celebration will be September 27-29 in Lexington, Kentucky, in the heart of the Bluegrass region.

Known as the "Horse Capital of the World, Lexington is blessed with an abundance of natural beauty. Lexington sits atop rolling hills of limestone laced with small caves and springs. The symposium and awards celebration offers a unique opportunity to gain insight into the many aspects critical to improving quality of life in communities, and will include opportunities to visit special historical venues.

Save the Date: 2019 America in Bloom Symposium & Awards Celebration October 3-5 in St Charles, Illinois



Great Ideas and Resources

Making America Bloom

Great Ideas and Resources

Besides providing our participants with written evaluations that help guide their progress, America in Bloom offers resources including an informative website, social media, unique books, brochures about the benefits of plants, and signs for our participants.

AmericanBloom.org

A trusted resource for details about AIB's national awards program, press releases, news, benefits of plants, grant opportunities, and more.

Webinars

Free, online, on-demand webinars cover topics related to harnessing the America in Bloom spirit in communities around the country.

YouTube Channel

Our own YouTube channel features videos created by participating towns telling the story of the benefits of America in Bloom participation.



Morro Bay in Bloom Committee

Social Media

We use Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and blogs to connect people to the benefits of improving quality of life through attention to horticulture, heritage preservation, environmental awareness, and community involvement.



E-Newsletter

Our monthly email newsletter reaches more than 20,000 people with tips, resources, and success stories.

Reaching Out

To grow our national awards and educational programs, we participated in these national events:

National League of Cities conference where we met mayors and city officials.

Cultivate where we connected with people in the horticulture industry.

AIB Startup Kit

To make participation easy, an exciting turnkey Startup Kit includes participation brochures; a CD with customizable presentations, posters, postcards; sample evaluation form; ideas and suggestions for a local contest involving the entire community, and more. It's everything participants need to build momentum.

City Signs

Thanks to a grant from the Diane Clasen Memorial Fund, we are able to provide each participant with a large metal AIB sign to demonstrate their involvement in the

awards program. Diane was an AIB judge since 2001 and was the first to achieve judging 100 towns. The fund was created with donations from her family, friends, and colleagues after her passing.

AIB Bookshelf

We continue to add to our lineup of book offerings.

Perspectives on Planting Pride is a 156-page retrospective of AIB's past president Dr. Marvin N. Miller's thoughts on community, plants, people, and how horticulture can improve lives.

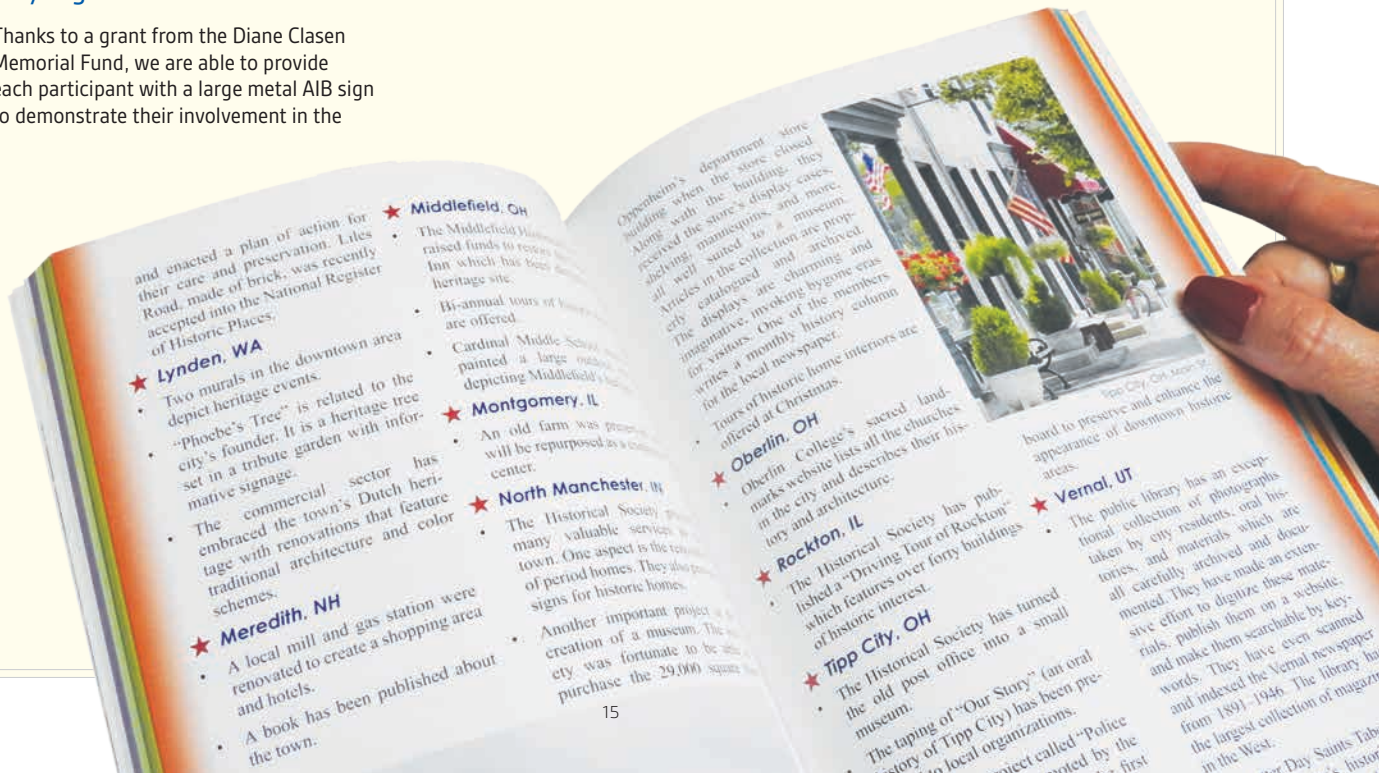
Our popular *Ten Years of Best Ideas* book with more than 2,000 ideas and photos has 3 companion pieces. *Best Ideas AIB Annual 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017* showcase the best ideas from program participants in their own words and special mentions from the judges.

AIB PowerPoints

Download from the AIB website and customize to share the AIB message with others.

Discover the Surprising Side of Plants

This 12-page brochure explains why and how plants go way beyond "pretty" to enhance your home, your work, your town, and even your friendships. Learn what plants do for you where you live, work, and play. Printed versions of the brochure are available from AIB or an electronic version can be downloaded free from the AIB website (www.AmericanBloom.org). A free companion PowerPoint presentation can be downloaded from the website so that anyone can share this powerful message with groups of all kinds.



and enacted a plan of action for their care and preservation. Liles Road, made of brick, was recently accepted into the National Register of Historic Places.

★ Lynden, WA

- Two murals in the downtown area depict heritage events.
- "Phoebe's Tree" is related to the city's founder. It is a heritage tree set in a tribute garden with informative signage.
- The commercial sector has embraced the town's Dutch heritage with renovations that feature traditional architecture and color schemes.

★ Meredith, NH

- A local mill and gas station were renovated to create a shopping area and hotels.
- A book has been published about the town.

★ Middlefield, OH

- The Middlefield Inn, which has been designated a National Historic Landmark, raised funds to restore the building and create a museum.
- Bi-annual tours of historic homes are offered.
- Cardinal Middle School painted a large mural depicting Middlefield's history.

★ Montgomery, IL

- An old farm was purchased and will be repurposed as a community center.

★ North Manchester, IN

- The Historical Society provides many valuable services to the town. One aspect is the restoration of period homes. They also provide signs for historic homes.
- Another important project is the creation of a museum. The city was fortunate to be able to purchase the 29,000 square

Oppeheim's department store building when the store closed. Along with the building, they received the store's display cases, shelving, mannequins, and more. All well suited to a museum. Articles in the collection are properly catalogued and archived. The displays are charming and imaginative, invoking bygone eras for visitors. One of the members writes a monthly history column for the local newspaper.

★ Oberlin, OH

- Oberlin College's sacred landmarks website lists all the churches in the city and describes their history and architecture.

★ Rockton, IL

- The Historical Society has published a "Driving Tour of Rockton" which features over forty buildings of historic interest.

★ Tipp City, OH

- The Historical Society has turned the old post office into a small museum.

The taping of "Our Story" (an oral history of Tipp City) has been presented to local organizations.



Tipp City, OH, April 12, 2015
board to preserve and enhance the appearance of downtown historic areas.

★ Vernal, VT

- The public library has an exceptional collection of photographs taken by city residents, oral histories, and materials which are all carefully archived and documented. They have made an extensive effort to digitize these materials, publish them on a website, and make them searchable by keywords. They have even scanned and indexed the Vernal newspaper from 1891-1946. The library has the largest collection of magazines in the West.



Ball Horticultural Company

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Thank you to the Ball Horticultural Company for its long-time support of AIB. This industry-leading company has worked hand-in-hand with AIB since Day One to help transform communities.

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Making America Bloom

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Our gratitude and heartfelt thanks to our national sponsors, symposium sponsors, and media partners who continue to invest in our mission. Our progress and success is a direct result of your generous support.

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GREELEY AND HANSEN

"Our direct line of business at Greeley and Hansen is providing engineering and consulting services for water-related infrastructure projects. Ultimately, our firm collaborates with municipalities to create better urban environments by developing sustainable water resources programs that benefit their communities. Our focus on environmental sustainability is strongly aligned with America in Bloom's mission to improve communities as well, and we're very proud to support their important efforts as a national sponsor."

John C. Robak
President and Chief Operating
Officer, Greeley and Hansen



Passionate Supporters

Making America Bloom

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Melissa Scherb: Woodlawns Landscape Company
Derek Schrof: Ball
Joe Simone: Fred C Gloeckner Company
Tom Smith: Four Star Greenhouse, Inc
Eugene Stickley: Ball
Tim Stiles: Masterpiece Flower Company LLC
Danny Takao: Takao Nursery
Paul Thomas
Virginia Walter: Cal Poly
Katy Moss Warner
Wanda Weder: Highland Supply Corporation
Kirk Weiss: Kurt Weiss Greenhouses
Mark Wilson
Craig Yoshida: Ball Seed Company
Frank Zauscherb: ZRB



Volunteer Professionals

Making America Bloom

Gifts from sponsors are highly leveraged by the efforts of our judges who each donate nearly a month or more to personally visit participating towns, meet community leaders, write evaluations, and provide ongoing coaching. Our dedicated all-volunteer board donates thousands of hours annually to promote and implement the program.

2017 Board of Directors

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President Emeritus, American Horticultural Society

Past President: Dr. Charlie Hall,
Texas A&M University

1st Vice President: Tony Ferrara,
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Walter Heath

Leslie Pittenger, City of Belpre

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Marjorie Egee Gates

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Bill Hahn

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Alex Pearl

Leslie Pittenger

Laurie Potier-Brown

Bruce Riggs

Karin Rindal

Susie Stratton

Barbara Vincentsen

Laurie Waller

Diana Weiner

Meg Whitmer

Teresa Woodward



Left: AIB strategic planning session



Thank You to Our Donors

Making America Bloom



Linda Adams

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Drew Becher

Bruce Benson

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Kristin Pategas

Ron Pierre

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Mary Zahl

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Fundraisers

Making America Bloom

Auctions Create Excitement for America in Bloom

In 2017 AIB held two auctions, its traditional silent auction held in conjunction with the annual symposium and awards program, and an online auction.

More than 990 items were donated to the silent auction and raised more than \$8,200. Our thanks to those generous donors and buyers for supporting this always-popular symposium activity.

The 2017 online auction launched in September, and featured exciting destinations for travel, plants, and other horticultural products, one-of-a-kind experiences, artwork, and more. More than \$11,400 was raised in the online auction, and we are thankful for those who donated interesting items that allowed AIB to extend its fundraising reach.



A lucky winner got to enjoy the Epcot International Flower & Garden Show.



Trip of a life offered to the historic Greenbrier luxury resort.



A custom architectural painting of your home was auctioned.



Several horticultural products were available in the auction.





The Economics

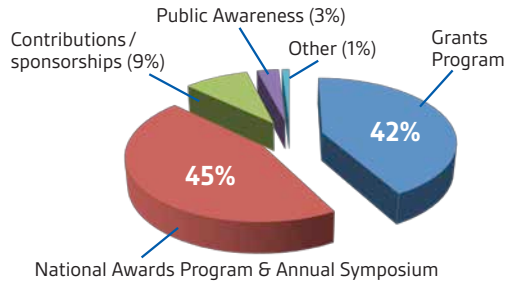
Making America Bloom

Financial Overview

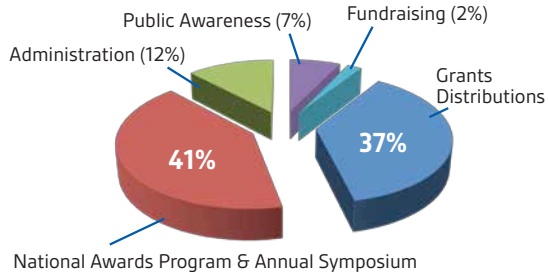
In 2017, we had revenue and in-kind contributions of \$622,157. This includes the thousands of hours donated by our judges, volunteers, and other in-kind donations.

America in Bloom is an independent, 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. All contributions to America in Bloom are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

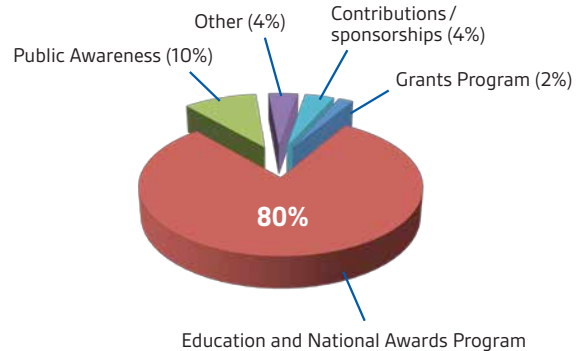
2017 Income



2017 Expenses



2017 In-Kind Contributions





Coshocton, OH



Giving to America in Bloom

America in Bloom is committed to working with corporate partners and strategic allies to improve the quality of life in American towns and cities. By partnering with America in Bloom, you join a group of well-respected companies and a network of committed citizens dedicated to planting pride in their communities.

We look forward to working with you. Contact our office for sponsorship details. Your contributions are tax-deductible.



Imagine what your community can do.



America in Bloom
PO Box 44005
Columbus, OH 43204
614-453-0744
aib@AmericaInBloom.org
www.AmericaInBloom.org