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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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America in Bloom Judges to Visit North Canton

Professional volunteer judges from the America in Bloom (AIB) national awards program will visit North Canton, Ohio on July 10 and 11. This is North Canton's second year as an America in Bloom participant and was recognized for its Urban Forestry initiatives in 2016. North Canton is one of the many proud and passionate communities across America working on local revitalization programs with an eye to receiving a prestigious America in Bloom national award.

North Canton joins Madisonville, Kentucky; Greenwood, South Carolina; Athens, Ohio; and Lockport Illinois in the 18,001-25,000 population category.

In addition to a receiving detailed written evaluation from the judges citing strengths and opportunities for improvement, participants receive a bloom rating and special mention for what the judges deem to be an extraordinary project or program. Additional awards that can be earned are as follows:

- Population category winner
- Outstanding achievement award – the “best of the best” over all participants in each of the six evaluated criteria
- Special awards
- Community Champion
- YouTube Video

Population category winners are invited to participate in international competition via the Communities in Bloom program in Canada.

Judges will be evaluating the community's efforts in the areas of overall impression, environmental efforts, heritage preservation, landscaped areas, urban forestry, floral displays, and community involvement in the municipal, commercial, and residential sectors.

The judging team members are Bruce Riggs and Susie Stratton.



Bruce Riggs



Susie Stratton

Bruce Riggs currently free-lances in horticulture and is involved in several not for profit institutions. He is also very involved in the family landscape design business with his wife Melanie Menachem Riggs who is also an AIB judge. They reside in New Rochelle, New York. He recently held the position of Curator of Science at the Bruce Museum (no relation!) of Arts & Science in Greenwich, CT.

During his 18 years at the New York Botanical Garden, Bruce was very involved with the Horticulture and Education Divisions. He administered the creation and implementation of the internationally recognized interpretation program for the NYBG.

He has recently been very involved in elementary school science and horticulture programs. He has worked on projects for the American Association of Museums and the Institute of Museum Studies. He has been very involved with Mountain Top Arboretum in Tannersville, NY, serving as President since 1998. Bruce is an avid traveler having visited numerous gardens and natural areas.

Susie Stratton and her husband Steve are owners and operators of Stratton Greenhouses, founded by Steve's father. Today it is a retail garden center, landscape and design operation and nursery serving the northwest Ohio region.

Susie is the retail manager of the business as well as the landscape and design professional. She has a degree in Art from Albion College as well as a Masters degree in College Student Personnel. Both of her skills are used when working with communities in the formation of design ideas. She also works with community leaders in trying to take their downtown districts to a higher level of beautification.

Susie has been instrumental in the beautification of the University of Findlay campus since 2007. She was also chairman of their America in Bloom entry for 2013

To date, nearly 250 communities from 45 states have participated in the program and more than 22 million people have been touched by it. Awards will be announced on October 5-7, 2017 at AIB's National Symposium & Awards, held this year in Holliston, MA.

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America in Bloom is an independent, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to promoting nationwide beautification programs and personal and community involvement through the use of flowers, plants, trees, and other environmental and lifestyle enhancements. America in Bloom provides educational programs, resources, and the challenge of a friendly competition between participating communities across the country.