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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Laura A. Kunkle

America in Bloom Executive Director

America in Bloom Judges to Visit Washington, Missouri

Professional volunteer judges from the America in Bloom (AIB) national awards program will visit Washington, Missouri on July 6 and 7. This is Washington's seventh year as an America in Bloom participant, and is a member of the prestigious *Community of Champions*, winner of its participation category in 2014 and 2016 and honored for being 'the Best of the Best' in *Urban Forestry* in 2013 and 2014 and *Community Involvement* in 2011. Washington 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.

Washington joins Estes Park, Colorado and Winter Park, Florida in the Circle of Champions contest for medium-sized cities.

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 Tony Ferrara and Barbara Vincentsen.



Tony Ferrara



Barbara Vincentsen

Tony Ferrara served 16 years on the Arroyo Grande, CA. City Council and 12 years as the City's elected mayor. Tony has held a number of municipal leadership positions including Board Chair of the San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District Board, and the County's Integrated Waste Management Board. More recently, Tony was the President of the League of California Cities, an advocacy and lobbying organization representing all 482 cities in California. Tony's passion is his 8-year involvement with Arroyo Grande in Bloom as both a volunteer and member of the AGIB Board. Arroyo Grande in Bloom is a 501(c)3 organization and is a multi-year, multi-category AIB award winner and proud member of the America In Bloom Circle of Champions. He is proficient in the development of municipal/volunteer relationships and promoting conservation and historical preservation programs. Tony was instrumental in developing and implementing a county-wide curb-side recycling program and alternative energy program to support the operation of the local sanitation district.

Tony holds a Master's Degree in Public Administration with emphasis in the Behavioral Sciences from the University of Southern California; and a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration from the University of Redlands. He is a former faculty member for the California State University Long Beach, as well as the University of Phoenix.

He is an active member of the America in Bloom Board of Directors and serves on the Symposium Committee of AIB.

Barbara Vincentsen is owner of Vincentsen Associates, a medium-sized award-winning architectural firm in Westfield, New Jersey. She grew up in a gardening family and has continued her family tradition in her own gardens, which have plantings shared from three generations of close family and friends. Her Westfield garden was featured in the 2010 America in Bloom program in Westfield.

Barbara is a licensed architect in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New York, and is a licensed professional planner and certified interior designer in New Jersey. She is actively involved in her community, serving on the boards of the Friends of Mindowaskin Park Committee and Fairview Cemetery Committee. She is a member of the Westfield Service League and Downtown Westfield Corporation Design Committee, and a past president of Central Section of New Jersey Chapter of the AIA.

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.