



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

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 13, 2017

Laura A. Kunkle

America in Bloom Executive Director

America in Bloom Judges to Visit Bluffton, Ohio

Professional volunteer judges from the America in Bloom (AIB) national awards program will visit Bluffton, Ohio, July 20-21. This is Bluffton's first year as an America in Bloom participant, and it 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.

Bluffton joins Lewisburg W.Va., Brewton, Ala., Combined Locks, Wis., Kimberly, Wis. and Catskill, N.Y. in the 3,500 to 9,999 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 Leslie Pittenger and Linda Cromer.



Leslie Pittenger



Linda Cromer

Leslie Pittenger is an AIB board member who chairs the national awards program committee and serves as the judge coordinator. Although her “official” position is City Auditor for Belpre, her passion for the improvement of her area has inspired community volunteers. Belpre received the 2013 and 2014 Outstanding Achievement Award for Community Involvement sponsored by the American Horticultural Society under her leadership as local AIB committee chairwoman. As an active member of the Belpre Garden Club and Belpre High School Greenhouse boosters, she works with local students to complete environmental and beautification projects. Currently serving her second term as auditor, her department has received the Ohio Auditor of State Award for exemplary financial reporting the last three years. She has completed the Ohio Tree Commission Academy course and has her Commercial Applicator license for pesticides through the Ohio Department of Agriculture. Leslie is the co-editor of the Best Ideas annual edition. She serves on the board of directors for the Belpre Alumnae Association and the Belpre Area Community Development Foundation. She graduated from the University of Georgia and was a business owner for 10 years. Leslie believes in – and has experienced – the value of AIB for the benefits it can bring to the well-being and pride of small towns across America.

Linda Cromer has served her community, Greendale, Indiana, in a variety of political positions including Planning Commissioner, Chairperson of the Park Board and Tree Board, and Housing Authority Commissioner. She sits on the Executive Boards and plays an active role in the efforts of several national and state non-profit organizations dedicated to social justice and environmental issues. Linda, who received a fine arts education at the University of Kansas, learned to love gardening at her grandmother’s knee. Owner and operator of a floral shop and greenhouse for over a decade, she has spent the bulk of her professional life traveling as an international representative for a labor organization, and has used those travel opportunities to audit design and horticulture classes at a number of universities, and to study the diversity and individuality of public gardens and the communities where they are located. Linda is past president and active member of the local Garden Club and spearheaded her community’s first participation in the America in Bloom Program in 2005.

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.

###

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.