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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 Catskill, N.Y.

Professional volunteer judges from the America in Bloom (AIB) national awards program will visit Catskill, N.Y., July 17-18. This is Catskill's sixth 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.

Catskill joins Lewisburg W.Va., Brewton, Ala., Combined Locks, Wis., Kimberly, Wis. and Bluffton, Ohio 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 Stephen Pategas and Meg Whiter.



Stephen Pategas



Meg Whitmer

Stephen Pategas is an award-winning landscape architect, garden writer, garden photographer, and plant geek in Winter Park, FL. He and his wife Kristin are owners of Hortus Oasis, a boutique landscape architecture company and authors of the book *Southern Coastal Home Landscaping* and gardening columns for local magazines. Their historic 1925 home and garden have been featured on numerous garden tours, in magazines, and on television including *Growing a Greener World* hosted by Joe Lamp'l. Stephen currently serves on the City of Winter Park's Keep Winter Park Beautiful & Sustainable Board and with it founded Winter Park Blooms. Previously he served on the Environmental Review Board, Tree Preservation Board, and the Parks and Recreation Board. After designing the gardens for Casa Feliz, a 1933 historic brick house that was saved from demolition and moved in 2000, Stephen joined the Friends of Casa Feliz board. His travels have taken him to hundreds of gardens in North America, Europe and Southeast Asia.

Meg Whitmer is a Florida licensed landscape architect with a lifelong commitment to beautification, conservation, environmental education and stewardship. A professional landscape architect for over 30 years, Meg's work spans the entire state of Florida. Dedicated to protecting our most cherished natural resource, WATER, Meg focuses on projects in urban coastal and watershed areas. Her passion for beautification was sparked early in her life: her mother and grandmother were active garden club members. As a Life Member of the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs, she continues their legacy by promoting youth and community gardening, volunteering her time at her local community garden.

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.