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## PRESS RELEASE

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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America in Bloom Executive Director

### **America in Bloom Judges to Visit Lewisburg, West Virginia**

Professional volunteer judges from the America in Bloom (AIB) national awards program will visit Lewisburg, West Virginia, July 6-7. This is Lewisburg's fourth 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.

Lewisburg joins Catskill, N.Y., 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 Rod Barnes.



Stephen Pategas



Rod Barnes

**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.

**Rod Barnes** currently serves as the Town Administrator for Edmonston (Md.), a small community in the Washington DC area. He has a master's degree in public administration from Kansas State University. During his 35 years in local government, he has served as purchasing agent, finance director, city clerk and city manager. In these roles, he has developed historic preservation projects, trail systems, and park in various communities. In his years at Edmonston, he has focused on the town's environmental efforts. He has expertise in the development of green streets that include the components of rain gardens, bike lanes, recycled materials and permeable paving. His other sustainable environment projects include the use of solar energy for heating town hall, the use of electric cars for code enforcement and public works. Rod was instrumental in the development of a community garden and three community fruit tree orchards in Edmonston.

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.