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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Laura A. Kunkle

America in Bloom Executive Director

Decatur, IL's America in Bloom Award Results Announced

(Columbus, OH): Top honors for the prestigious 2018 America in Bloom National Awards Program were announced at the annual symposium and awards celebration held in Lexington, KY on September 29.

Decatur was the winner of the Best Use of Social Media special award, one of 10 surprise awards announced during the symposium. Decatur received a 7-star rating out of a possible 10 stars and received special recognition for its Landscaped Areas. Decatur was also the winner of the YouTube Video Award. Kristen Pategas & Mary Hertel, AIB judges, spent two days touring the community, meeting municipal officials, residents, and volunteers. Other communities in the 25,000 - 75,000 population category were Athens, OH; Mansfield, OH; and West Chicago, IL.

All participants were evaluated on seven criteria: overall impression, community vitality, environmental efforts, heritage celebration, urban forestry, landscaped areas, and flowers. Additionally, they were judged on their community involvement across municipal, residential, and commercial sectors. America in Bloom is the only national awards program that sends specially trained judges to personally visit participants. In addition, each participant receives a detailed written evaluation that can be used as a guide to future improvements.

America in Bloom executive director, Laura Kunkle, said, "America in Bloom is helping towns and cities of all sizes achieve their potential. Every year our participants raise the bar, and the accomplishments and progress shown by this year's group is again remarkable. These are, without a doubt, some of the best places to live in America."

To date, more than 250 communities from 45 states have participated in the program and more than 22 million people have been touched by it. Registrations for the 2018 national awards program can be submitted until February 28, 2020. Eligible participants include towns, cities, college and university campuses, business districts, military installations, and recognized neighborhoods of large cities.

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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.