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America in Bloom Judges to Visit Belpre, Ohio

Judges from the America in Bloom (AIB) national awards program will visit Belpre, Ohio on July 7 and 8, 2014. This is Belpre's third entry in the America in Bloom national awards program. The town is one of 33 towns across America working on local revitalization programs with the hopes of receiving a prestigious America in Bloom national award.

Belpre is competing against Brewton, AL; Greendale, IN; Catskill, NY; and Estes Park, CO in the 4,500 to 10,000 population category.

Participants are evaluated in the following areas: overall impression, heritage preservation, environmental efforts, urban forestry, landscapes, floral displays, and community involvement. The judges evaluate these criteria in the residential, commercial, and municipal sectors.

Judges are Sue Amatangelo and Susie Stratton.



Sue Amatangelo



Susie Stratton

Sue Amatangelo brings a well-rounded background to her judging for America in Bloom. After a successful career as a medical technologist, Sue worked in medical sales and management before raising a family and working part time as a golf instructor.

Sue is currently the Director of "Home and Garden Showplace," a division of True Value where she is in charge of 220 independent garden centers across the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean. Sue is a Plan Commissioner for the city of St. Charles, Illinois, and is the author of Absolutely Beautiful Containers.

Susie Stratton and her husband Steve are owners and operators of Stratton Greenhouses, founded by Steve's father. Today it is a retail garden center, landscape and design operation and nursery serving the northwest Ohio region.

Susie is the retail manager of the business as well as the landscape and design professional. She has a degree in Art from Albion College as well as a Masters degree in College Student Personnel. Both of her skills are used

when working with communities in the formation of design ideas. She also works with community leaders in trying to take their downtown districts to a higher level of beautification.

Susie has been instrumental in the beautification of the University of Findlay campus since 2007. She was also chairman of their America in Bloom entry for 2013. They won the top Environmental Award as well as Special Mention and a 4 bloom rating.

Susie says, "My passion is bringing beauty to the world one project at a time."

Participants have opportunities to receive recognition in the following areas:

- Bloom rating
- Population category winner
- Outstanding achievement award – the "best of the best" over all participants in each of the six evaluated criteria
- Special mention – for what the judges deem to be an extraordinary project or program.
- Population category winners are invited to participate in international competition via the Communities in Bloom program in Canada.
- Community Champion
- YouTube Video Award

To date, more than 220 towns and cities from 41 states have participated in the program and more than 20 million people have been touched by it. Awards will be announced on October 4 at AIB's National Symposium and Awards, held this year in Philadelphia, PA.

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America in Bloom is an independent non-profit 501c3 corporation. America in Bloom envisions communities across the country as welcoming and vibrant places to live, work, and play – benefiting from colorful plants and trees; enjoying clean environments; celebrating heritage; and planting pride through volunteerism.