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America in Bloom Judges to Visit Calabasas, CA

Judges from the America in Bloom (AIB) national awards program will visit Calabasas, CA on June 5 and 6, 2014. This is Calabasas' second 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.

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.

Calabasas is competing against Venice, FL; Portsmouth, OH; and Madisonville, KY in the 19,001 to 24,000 population category.

Judges are Alex Pearl and Leslie Pittenger.



Alex Pearl



Leslie Pittenger

Alex Pearl, of Centerville, Ohio has been an AIB judge since the America in Bloom's inception. He is also among the group of founders. Alex is a retired Horticulture educator whose career has taken him in many different directions. He has held positions in higher education, botanical gardens, private industry and in his own business. Alex retired from the State of Ohio in 2011, where he taught Vocational Horticulture for the Ohio Central School System, a charter school of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections. Alex holds Horticulture degrees from the State University of New York, and New Mexico State University, a Masters in Botanical Garden Management from the University of Delaware and a Master's in Education from The Ohio State University. His is an active member of various trade and amateur horticultural organizations. His long association with in bloom programs through America in Bloom and the Canadian program Communities in Bloom has taken him to cities across North America and Europe. He is a strong advocate of the benefits in bloom programs provide people and communities. Alex's motto is 'plants change lives'.

Leslie Pittenger. 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 Outstanding Achievement Award for Community Involvement sponsored by the American Horticultural Society. As an active member of the Belpre Garden Club, she works with local students to complete environmental and beautification projects. Currently serving her second term as Auditor, she has received the Ohio Auditor of State Award for exemplary financial reporting. 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 ten 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.

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.