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America in Bloom Judges to Visit Henderson County, NC

Judges from the America in Bloom (AIB) national awards program will visit Henderson County, NC on June 27 and 27, 2014. This is Henderson County's first 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.

Henderson County is competing against Winter Park, FL; Santa Paula, CA; and Holland, MI in the 24,001 to 50,000 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 Linda Cromer and Ed Hooker.



Linda Cromer



Ed Hooker

Linda Cromer has served her community, Greendale, Indiana, in a variety of political positions including Planning Commissioner, Chairperson of the Park Board and Tree Board, and Housing Authority Commissioner. She sits on the Executive Boards and plays an active role in the efforts of several national and state non-profit organizations dedicated to social justice and environmental issues.

Linda, who received a fine arts education at the University of Kansas, learned to love gardening at her grandmother's knee. Owner and operator of a floral shop and greenhouse for over a decade, she has spent the bulk of her professional life traveling as an international representative for a labor organization, and has used those travel opportunities to audit design and horticulture classes at a number of universities, and to study the diversity and individuality of public gardens and the communities where they are located.

Linda is past president and active member of the local Garden Club and spearheaded her community's first participation in the America in Bloom Program in 2005.

Ed Hooker, III currently serves as the first Historical Architect of the National Cemetery Administration (NCA), Veterans Affairs (VA). The NCA oversees 131 National Veterans Cemeteries through the United States and Puerto Rico.

Hooker began his career in federal service in 2006 as the Historic Architect and Cultural Resources Manager at Fort Riley, KS. After graduating from Auburn University with a degree in architecture, he began his career in historic preservation with the Alabama Historical Commission, the Alabama State Historic Preservation Office, where he worked with communities to realize the potential of their threatened historic landmarks. He later was the historic architect for the Mobile Historic Development Commission, where he staffed the city's Architectural Review Board and provided preservation guidance and architectural design assistance to residents of Mobile's 8 historic districts. Hooker credits his passion for historic preservation to growing up in the Black Belt region of Alabama, volunteering as a docent for his community's annual pilgrimage, and being made aware at an early age the importance of heritage and history. He considers himself an avid amateur gardener, and enjoys container and patio gardening. Ed also served for two years on his town's AIB Committee.

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.