



For immediate release.

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America in Bloom Judges to Visit Echo, OR

Judges from the America in Bloom (AIB) national awards program will visit Echo on June 18 and 19. This is Echo's eighth entry in the America in Bloom national awards program. The town is one of 42 towns across America working on local revitalization programs with the hopes of receiving a prestigious America in Bloom national award.

Echo is competing against Gallipolis, OH; Lewes, DE; Greendale, IN, and McCall, ID in the Circle of Champions category with populations under 5000.

All 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 Bruce Riggs and Leslie Pittenger.



Bruce Riggs



Leslie Pittenger

Bruce Riggs currently free-lances in horticulture and is involved in several not for profit institutions. He is also very involved in the family landscape design business with his wife Melanie Menachem Riggs who is also an AIB judge. They reside in New Rochelle, New York. He recently held the position of Curator of Science at the Bruce Museum (no relation!) of Arts & Science in Greenwich, CT.

During his 18 years at the New York Botanical Garden, Bruce was very involved with the Horticulture and Education Divisions. He administered the creation and implementation of the internationally recognized interpretation program for the NYBG.

He has recently been very involved in elementary school science and horticulture programs. He has worked on projects for the American Association of Museums and the Institute of Museum Studies. He has been very involved with Mountain Top Arboretum in Tannersville, NY, serving as President since 1998. Bruce is an avid traveler having visited numerous gardens and natural areas around the world.

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.
- Special awards
- 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 240 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 September 26 at AIB’s National Symposium and Awards, held this year in Holland, MI.

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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.

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