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America in Bloom Judges to Visit Rockford, IL

Judges from the America in Bloom (AIB) national awards program will visit Rockford on June 18 and 19. This is Rockford's fourth 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.

Rockford is competing against Lexington, KY and Henderson County, NC in the Over 40,000 population category.

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 Alex Pearl and Barbara Vincentsen.



Alex Pearl



Barbara Vincentsen

Alex Pearl, from 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 Masters in Education from Ohio State University. He 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 Communities in Bloom program 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'.

Barbara Vincentsen is owner of Vincentsen Associates, a medium-sized award-winning architectural firm in Westfield, New Jersey. She grew up in a gardening family and has continued her family tradition in her own gardens, which have plantings shared from three generations of close family members and friends. Her Westfield garden was featured in the 2010 America in Bloom program in Westfield.

Barbara is a licensed architect in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New York, and is a licensed professional planner and certified interior designer in New Jersey. She is actively involved in her community, serving on the boards of the Friends of Mindowaskin Park Committee and Fairview Cemetery Committee. She is a member of the Westfield Service League and Downtown Westfield Corporation Design Committee, and a past president of Central Section of New Jersey Chapter of the AIA.

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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