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America in Bloom Judges to Visit St. Charles, IL

Judges from the America in Bloom (AIB) national awards program will visit St. Charles on July 13 and 14. This is St. Charles' first 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.

St. Charles is competing against Saratoga, CA; Santa Paula, CA; and Hopkinsville, KY in the 30,000 to 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 Meg Whitmer and Jack Clasen.



Meg Whitmer



Jack Clasen

Meg Whitmer is a Florida licensed landscape architect with a lifelong commitment to beautification, conservation, environmental education and stewardship. As a professional landscape architect for over 30 years, Meg's work spans the entire state of Florida, from the Florida Keys to the Florida Panhandle. Dedicated to protecting our most cherished natural resource, WATER, Meg focuses on projects in urban coastal and watershed areas. She recently became a part-time resident of Jackson Hole, Wyoming, in order to fully experience the four seasons, broaden her horticultural knowledge in mountain garden design, and learn more about watershed protection in high mountain desert regions.

As a Life Member of the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs, she promotes youth and community gardening, volunteering her time at schoolyard and community gardens and summer youth camp programs. In 2006 she organized an America In Bloom campaign in Stuart, FL. The City of Stuart won the top AIB award in its population category in 2008.

Meg is a member of the Tampa Garden Club, Tampa Heights Community Garden and serves on the

Tampa Heights Community Redevelopment Advisory Board. She currently divides her time between her new hometown of Tampa and Florida's southeast coast, serving clients throughout the central and southern regions of Florida.

Jack Clasen, from Raleigh North Carolina, chairs the Contest Committee, the Judges Selection and Training Committee, and serves on America in Bloom's Board of Directors. He has been with America in Bloom (AIB) since its inception and has judged cities, universities, and business districts throughout the United States and international communities in Canada, Ireland, and Scotland.

As a Master Gardener Jack is an avid volunteer. He co-founded Mason in Bloom, which participated in AIB in 2004 and 2005. Jack was a member of the Mason Tree Committee, vice president of the Mason Library Board of Trustees, supervised the period landscape restoration at the Mason Historic Society, and chaired the annual "Art in the Garden" Tour.

Jack's own garden has been on numerous garden tours, was selected by the Cincinnati Horticultural Society as one of the ten best amateur gardens in Cincinnati, filmed for Home and Garden TV's Do-It-Yourself (DIY) Network, scouted by editors of Better Homes and Gardens Magazine, and featured in the October 2007, issue of Cincinnati Magazine.

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

After the awards, participants also receive a detailed, written evaluation.

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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