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For more information, contact Laura Kunkle (614-487-1117) aib@americainbloom.org

America in Bloom Judges to Visit West Columbia, TX

Judges from the America in Bloom (AIB) national awards program will visit West Columbia, TX on April 27 and 28. This is West Columbia's 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.

West Columbia is competing against Brewton, AL; Lewisburg, WV; and Catskill, NY in the 3500 to 6000 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 Linda Cromer and Jack Clasen.



Linda Cromer



Jack Clasen

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.

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

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.

www.AmericanBloom.org 2103 Stella Ct. Columbus, OH. 43215