



MEDIA RELEASE

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Winter Garden, FL America in Bloom National 2013 Awards Results Announced

(COLUMBUS, OH): After months of anxious waiting, top honors for the prestigious 2013 America in Bloom national awards program were announced at the annual awards held in Orlando, Florida on September 21.

America in Bloom executive director, Laura Kunkle, said, “America in Bloom is helping participants of all types achieve their potential. The accomplishments and progress shown by this year's towns and cities is remarkable.”

Winter Garden received a four bloom rating and special mention for its efforts in heritage preservation.

Winter Garden was judged on six criteria: overall impression, community involvement, environmental awareness, heritage, urban forestry, landscape, and floral displays, across four sectors: municipal, residential, commercial, and community involvement.

Bruce Riggs and Barbara Vincentsen, two specially trained AIB judges, visited towns of similar populations and spent two days touring each town, meeting municipal officials, residents, and volunteers. Other competitors in the 30,001 to 50,000 category were Holland, MI; DeKalb, IL; and Huntington, WV.

Riggs and Vincentsen were particularly impressed by the city's efforts in heritage preservation and commented, “Winter Garden has done a great deal to keep its original character as a lakeside and railroad-founded community. It keeps its heritage alive in part by having two railroad museums because there were two active rail lines built through town to ship citrus to market. The rail lines have been converted to extensive biking and hiking trails that run through the downtown bringing many to this district. Historically significant buildings have been restored and repurposed; municipal grants have provided significant assistance in seven major restoration projects. Two landmark districts have been established and ancient massive live oak trees are protected and preserved. The unique historic character of the central district and active support of it is a driver in the renaissance of Winter Garden.”

Congratulations to Winter Garden!

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Registrations for the 2014 national awards program can be submitted until February 28, 2014. Eligible participants include towns, cities, college and university campuses, business districts, military installations, and recognized neighborhoods of large cities.

America in Bloom is an independent, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. 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. For more information, visit www.americainbloom.org.