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America in Bloom Judges to Visit Calabasas, CA

Professional volunteer judges from the America in Bloom (AIB) national awards program will visit Calabasas, CA on June 9 and 10. This is Calabasas' fourth year as an America in Bloom participant, and is one of the many proud and passionate communities across America working on local revitalization programs with an eye to receiving a prestigious America in Bloom national award. In 2013 and 2014, Calabasas won in its population category. The city also received a special award for most impressive tree canopy.

Calabasas joins Greenwood, SC; Venice and Winter Park, FL in the 20,000 to 30,000 population category.

In addition to a receiving detailed written evaluation from the judges citing strengths and opportunities for improvement, participants receive a bloom rating and special mention for what the judges deem to be an extraordinary project or program. Additional awards that can be earned are as follows:

- Population category winner
- Outstanding achievement award – the “best of the best” over all participants in each of the six evaluated criteria
- Special awards
- Community Champion
- YouTube Video Award

Population category winners are invited to participate in international competition via the Communities in Bloom program in Canada.

Judges will be evaluating the community's efforts in the areas of overall impression, environmental efforts, heritage, landscaped areas, urban forestry, floral displays, and community involvement in the municipal, commercial and residential sectors.

The judging team members are Tony Ferrara and Jay Harper.



Tony Ferrara



Jay Harper

Tony Ferrara has served 16 years on the Arroyo Grande, CA. City Council and 12 years as the city's elected mayor. Tony has held a number of municipal leadership positions including Board Chair of the San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District Board, and the County's Integrated Waste

Management Board. More recently, Tony was the President of the League of California Cities, an advocacy and lobbying organization representing all 482 cities in California. Tony's passion is his 8-year involvement with Arroyo Grande in Bloom as both a volunteer and member of the AGIB Board. He is proficient in the development of municipal/volunteer relationships and promoting conservation and historical preservation programs. Tony holds a Master's Degree in Public Administration with emphasis in the Behavioral Sciences from the University of Southern California; and a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration from the University of Redlands. He is a former faculty member for the California State University Long Beach, as well as the University of Phoenix. He is second vice president on the America in Bloom Board of Directors.

John "Jay" Harper is a third generation horticulturist. He and his two brothers operate Harper's Landscape and Gardening Centre in Scottsdale, AZ. Jay is past president of the Arizona Nursery Association and was instrumental in developing what is becoming a national marketing program for the plant industry called "Plant Something". He has also served on the board of the Desert Botanical Gardens in Phoenix and on boards for area Young Life and his church. One of Jay's passions is teaching and he gives many talks and speeches to local garden clubs and has taught various topics of horticulture at the local community college. One of the highlights of his career was hosting a weekly call-in radio show which Jay has hosted for nearly 30 years.

To date, nearly 250 communities from 41 states have participated in the program and more than 22 million people have been touched by it. Awards will be announced on October 6-8, 2016 at AIB's National Symposium and Awards, held this year in Arroyo Grande, CA.

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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