



For immediate release.

For more information, contact Laura Kunkle (614-453-0744) aib@americainbloom.org

America in Bloom Judges to Visit Ironton, Ohio

Professional volunteer judges from the America in Bloom (AIB) national awards program will visit Ironton, Ohio on June 20 and 21. This is Ironton's third year as an America in Bloom participant, and it 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.

Ironton joins Morro Bay, Calif., Lawrenceburg, Ky. and Newtown Square, Pa. in the 10,000-14,000 population category. In past years, Ironton has been recognized for its floral displays.

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 Kristin Pategas and Leslie Pittenger.



Kristin Pategas



Leslie Pittenger

Kristin Pategas of Winter Park, FL is a certified Landscape Designer and horticulturist. Kristin and her husband, Stephen, are co-owners of Hortus Oasis, a boutique landscape architecture company and co-authors of the book Southern Coastal Home Landscaping. Together they write regular gardening columns for Winter Park Home Magazine and The Park Press.

Kristin's career began in 1982 when she joined the Walt Disney World Company as a plant pathologist at The Land, EPCOT. During her 18 years with Disney she also managed the Walt Disney World Nursery, developed educational programming for the Epcot International Flower & Garden Festival, and was a Program Manager for The Disney Institute. In 2001 she joined her husband to form Hortus Oasis; where they design residential, commercial and specialty gardens, trial new plants, practice sustainable gardening and donate their time and talents to the community.

Kristin currently serves on the educational committee for the Florida Nurserymen, Growers and Landscape Association (FNGLA), is the 2014 Local Committee Chair for the Association of Professional Landscape Designers (APLD) and helps organize the Autumn Mead Botanical Garden Plant Sale. Kristin can often be found with her husband tending the gardens at their 1925 home or teaching about landscape design at Harry P. Leu Gardens, the Winter Park Public Library, garden clubs and other groups in Central Florida. Kristin enjoys giving people the tools they need to create and maintain beautiful garden sanctuaries.

Leslie Pittenger is from Belpre, Ohio. Although her "official" position is City Auditor for Belpre, her passion for the improvement of her area has inspired community volunteers. Belpre received the 2013 and 2014 Outstanding Achievement Award for Community Involvement sponsored by the American Horticultural Society under her leadership as local AIB committee chairwoman. As an active member of the Belpre Garden Club and Belpre High School Greenhouse boosters, she works with local students to complete environmental and beautification projects. Currently serving her second term as Auditor, her department has received the Ohio Auditor of State Award for exemplary financial reporting the last three years. She has completed the Ohio Tree Commission Academy course and has her Commercial Applicator license for pesticides through the Ohio Department of Agriculture. Leslie is the co-editor of the Best Ideas annual edition in 2014 and 2015. She serves on the board of directors for the Belpre Alumnae Association and the Belpre Area Community Development Foundation. She graduated from the University of Georgia, and was a business owner for 10 years. Leslie believes in – and has experienced - the value of AIB for the benefits it can bring to the well-being and pride of small towns across America.

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.

www.AmericaInBloom.org 21030 Stella Ct. Columbus, OH. 43215

###