

## **America in Bloom Announces Communities in 2012 Program**

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2130 Stella Court  
Columbus, OH 43215  
614-487-1117 • Fax: 614-487-1216  
[aib@ofa.org](mailto:aib@ofa.org)  
[www.americainbloom.org](http://www.americainbloom.org)

### **For Immediate Release**

Laura A. Kunkle  
America in Bloom Communications

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Celebrating the eleventh anniversary of America in Bloom, residents of 25 towns across America are working on local revitalization programs, as they prepare for visits from America in Bloom (AIB) judges. These towns are planting, cleaning, and doing everything they can to be in the running to be named the best blooming, most livable town in America.

The America in Bloom national awards program is open to towns and cities of all sizes. The smallest town has been Shipshewana, IN, with a population of 502, and the largest being Chicago, Illinois. To date, 200 towns and cities from 40 states have participated in the program and more than 21 million people have been touched by it. Towns are evaluated against others in the same population category.

Judging will begin in June and continue through early August. America in Bloom is the only program of its type in the United States that sends pairs of specially trained judges to visit each participating town for two days of extensive touring, interviews with municipal representatives, and meetings with community volunteers, providing coaching and mentoring. This year, America in Bloom is debuting a simplified evaluation form, reducing the number of evaluated criteria to six (from eight) and adding a community involvement component in each criterion. Judges evaluate overall impressions, environmental effort, heritage preservation, urban forestry, landscaped areas, and floral displays. These criteria are examined across four sectors: commercial, municipal, residential and community involvement.

Judges will prepare an extensive written evaluation offering observations of exceptional practices and suggestions for improvements. It is given to the community after awards are announced in September. Many towns use these evaluations as a blueprint for further enhancements to their quality of life and to support grant applications.

While several of the 2012 competing towns are back in the program after many years of participation, others are first-time entries.

Participants have opportunities to receive recognition in the following areas:

- Population category winner
- Criteria award – the “best of the best” overall across all population categories in each of the six evaluated criteria
- Special mention – for what the judges deem to be an extraordinary project or program
- Population category winners are invited to participate in international competition via the Communities in Bloom program in Canada.
- Current and past participants are eligible to win a cash prize in the America in Bloom You Tube competition, by submitting a short video describing the impact of the program on their town.

Laura Kunkle, AIB's executive director, said, "Our participants have told us that they are all winners beginning with the day they decide to be part of the America in Bloom family. The effort of being part of the program makes such a visible difference and generates so much excitement in each town that they are all better for it, not just during their years of participation, but for years afterwards. Participation in America in Bloom makes a lasting impression and can change the way a city looks at itself and how its various sectors work together."

Awards will be announced at AIB's Educational Symposium & Awards Program, held this year in Fayetteville, Arkansas, September 20-22, 2012.

Jack Clasen, PhD, awards program chair, stated, "It's exciting to see ten new participating towns in this year's lineup. We've worked hard on promotion this year and this list of participants demonstrates that our new Community Action Kit is doing the job."

Participants for 2012 are: (\* indicates new participant for 2012)

Arroyo Grande, CA  
Belpre, OH\*  
Castle Rock, WA \*  
Charles City, IA  
Coshocton, OH  
Demopolis, AL  
Fayetteville, AR  
Gallipolis, OH  
Greendale, IN  
Hermann, MO \*  
Holland, MI  
Hummelstown, PA \*  
Jonesville, MI  
Lakeside, OH \*  
Madisonville, KY \*  
McCall, ID  
Plymouth, IN  
Racine, WI \*  
Rising Sun, IN  
Slippery Rock, PA  
Smithfield, VA \*  
Springfield, OH  
Tarboro, NC \*  
Washington, MO  
Winter Garden, FL \*

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America in Bloom is a non-profit 501c3 corporation whose mission is to promote nationwide beautification through education and community involvement by encouraging the use of flowers, plants, trees, and other environmental and lifestyle enhancements.