

Laura – please send this release on or before June 20 to the West Chicago press list.

For immediate release.

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America in Bloom Judges Visit West Chicago, IL

Judges from the America in Bloom (AIB) national awards program will visit West Chicago, IL on July 8 and 9. This is West Chicago's first entry in the America in Bloom national awards program. The town is one of 28 towns across America working on local revitalization programs with the hopes of receiving a prestigious America in Bloom national award.

West Chicago is competing against Winter Park, FL; Wake Forest, NC; and Kent, OH in the 25,001 to 30,000 population category.

Judges are Jack Clasen and Jim Sutton.



Jack Clasen



Jim Sutton

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 (Ohio) 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.

Jim Sutton is the Display Designer for Longwood Gardens, one of the world's great gardens, encompassing 1,077 acres of gardens, woodlands, meadows, fountains and a 4-acre conservatory complex. Jim is a former Peace Corps volunteer, where he served in Honduras demonstrating soil conservation and improvement techniques and teaching environmental awareness. He has also taught English as a second language for several years and Horticulture at a local vocational school.

Jim's education in Horticulture is from Pennsylvania State University. He has served on a local beautification committee and volunteered at the Community Arts center. His own garden has been

featured on several garden tours. Jim regularly judges at the Philadelphia Flower show and numerous competitions at other gardens. He also lectures and conducts floral demonstrations.

America in Bloom judges spend two days in each town and do extensive touring, conduct interviews with municipal representatives, and meet with community volunteers. They evaluate six criteria: overall impression, environmental efforts, heritage preservation, urban forestry, landscapes, and floral displays. These criteria are examined across four sectors: commercial, municipal, residential, and community involvement. The 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.

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.
- Population category winners are invited to participate in international competition via the Communities in Bloom program in Canada.
- Community Champion
- YouTube Video

To date, more than 200 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 21, 2013 at AIB’s National Symposium and Awards, held this year in Orlando, 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.