

2019 Cool & Bright Ideas
Collected at the 2019 America in Bloom Symposium & Awards Celebration



Lewisburg, West Virginia

Volunteers and City re-lifted all the fallen gravestones at 2 cemeteries, researched the history of all the graves/people in the slave/civil war cemetery, and recorded the history for visitors to learn following a walking path.

Mansfield, Ohio

Micro Farmers-OSU provides grant money to communities that have an OSU campus to build hoop houses for micro farms. Mansfield placed them on old factory sites, mostly in low income areas. The produce that is grown is sold to local businesses and restaurants. After costs, the farmer can make up to 35K/year.

Hawthorn Woods, Illinois

Repurposed Heritage Trees-Stumps from a 138 year old oak tree that had to be taken down were hollowed out, drainage holes added and the tree stump planted with annuals. Each planted stump was placed in key areas around the city such as the police department, and outside of businesses. This was a great effort between the public works department and the community. HW Business in Bloom, each owner buys carved tree trunk, change planting or decorations with season, and request students to tend them. They are also planted with bulbs for spring and change out with the seasons. A weekly e-blast to 2400 homes, vote for favorites.

Logan, Ohio

Repurposed a building that was offered to Logan-The building was moved, rebuilt with all volunteers, and is now used as the Information Center for the Hocking Hills Valley. Logan is the gateway community to the Hocking Hills Valley in which 4-5 million visitors pass through each year.

Owen, Wisconsin

An auto route (the Yellowstone Trail) runs through the community. School children planted marigolds along the trail. In the city park, Wi-Fi has been made accessible and the pavilion in the park has been landscaped with donated plants.

Calabasas, California

A concrete waterway was converted into a linear park. The three-phase conversion turned a concrete utility area into an inviting greenway enhanced with the planting of 1,000 oak trees.

Greenwood, South Carolina

Tweet on Main Street-Public art project initiated by 5th graders. The local pottery group helped them create 9 birds native to the area and the public works department installed the birds in strategic locations for a scavenger hunt. Clues were created and a brochure designed. This is an attraction to both residents and visitors allowing everyone to explore uptown Greenwood and enjoy the beautiful landscaping and flowers.

Brewton, Alabama

Brewton is expanding the number of activities/amenities in the E.O. Wilson Nature Park. This includes the creation of the "Mossman" sculpture made from natural materials sourced in the park. It has proven a great way to excite and invite kids to explore the park.

Warrenville, Illinois

Warrenville Trailhead Project-The Illinois prairie path, used by 100,000+ was improved through collaboration with other groups to enhance the facilities, picnic areas, bike fix it stations, etc. through grants received.

Holland, Michigan

Community partnerships have been important. Before taking on a project, discussions take place with stakeholders privately, in public discussion, brainstorming and online. Consultants and staff members use information from public feedback which lead to a positive project with positive input on a waterfront project of a power plant that had relocated. The land is getting a public vote and input.

San Luis Obispo, California

There are many tourists that hike and use the trails around San Luis Obispo (SLO). Adopting a sculpture program for the trail heads is being developed. The sculptures will be themed for hiking, will be a selfie spot for tourists or will mark history.

Lewisburg, West Virginia

Community civic groups took over an old hotel and is repurposing it into a community center with hiking trails, restaurant, farmers market, etc. It has become a gathering center and has gotten young people, boy scouts, and school children active in the community.

Venice, Florida

Our city, Venice, was in serious need of doing some major sewer work in the middle of town that would require redoing the downtown streets. To make it more palatable to the citizens they put together a roads and beautification bond issue for \$18 million to fix streets, sidewalks, irrigation and replaced sewers. Street furniture, several hundred trees, new landscaping, safety pedestrian crosswalks, and 40 double hangers poles with water lines for hanging baskets were all added. It has been huge success.

Warrenville, Illinois

Tailored municipal ordinance to support llamas. The llamas are now a Warrenville mascot. Ordinances in support of miniature horses and beekeepers are included as well.

Estes Park, Colorado

Sensory Garden was installed in Wyndham Park featuring texture sounds (grasses), four musical instruments, and a river of recycled glass targeted toward young kids 3-9.

Lewisburg, West Virginia

Reconstruction after a fire in 1998 included a Splash Pad/Play fountain that was installed and has been a big draw. Built with local and state grant money, it adds vitality to the area and attracts a younger demographic .

Brewton, Alabama

Plant Pull – our community calls people to help remove old installations and they can take home plant material (lantanas, begonia, licorice, pentas). Other material is composted and volunteers can take compost for their gardens.

Holland, Michigan

Tree Inventory - Partnered with Hope College matching \$3K with another \$3K to hire a student to initiate a tree inventory. In first phase 1/3 was completed. With additional funding and student hires, the inventory is now 80% complete.

West Chicago, Illinois

West Chicago changed the size of their hanging baskets and began using 2 baskets per light pole downtown. The city also increased the size and number of containers, creating groupings in several spots throughout downtown to increase the flower power. As a result, more folks visit the downtown merchants. It's about scale and impact to create economic results.

Washington, Missouri

Urban forestry has conducted a tree inventory of formal parks and recommended what species of trees are needed in each park. New memorial tree program will include trees, benches, trash or recycle cans-signs instead of individual stones/plaques recognizing all donors in progress. Memorial signage is proposed to be eliminated and replace with online locations and information along with signage at each park listing memorials. Benches and trees will be contracted out at actual costs and bench locations will be limited and selected by urban forestry and parks. Memorial possibilities at different entry levels could include recycling cans, trash cans, picnic tables, and monetary donations and signage could list donors.

Washington, Missouri

Health/Wellness for volunteer fire company. Connected with local physicians to participate and monitor fire department members' health and wellness.

Ottawa, Illinois

Our community started buying flood prone properties with the assistance of state and federal grants. The properties were cleared and space was turned into park area. These efforts along with some additional storm water mitigation resulted in a lowering of our score for flood insurance allowing the residents to lower their flood insurance premiums. This benefits the entire community in lessening the impact of floods on our town.

Ridgeland, Mississippi

Planted 307 crepe myrtle trees in the median of a relatively new parkway that runs from our city limits on the north to our city limits on the south.

Winter Garden, Florida

1,000 trees for 1,000 years. On February 22, 2020, we will assemble 200 volunteers to plant 1,000 1 gallon bald cypress trees. Bald cypress trees can grow for 3,000 years. We are partnering with a nursery that will sell us the trees for \$1.00. 1,000 trees for 1,000 years for \$1,000-all in one day.

Logan, Ohio

Students, along with Logan in Bloom and the high school art teacher, made Logan in Bloom (LIB) flags/banners to hang downtown. LIB provided the materials, students researched the flower and drew on the flag. This year there were 22 banners entered. The community votes for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place and cash prizes of \$100, \$75, and \$50 were awarded. As a fund raiser for Logan in Bloom, the flags are hung downtown and community members can sponsor a flag for \$50.

Coshocton, Ohio

IPM plan at the botanical garden. Received a couple of grants for an 11 acre woodland area. Conducted plant and pest diagnostic clinics in the garden.

Brewton, Alabama

The D.O. Wilson Park is a local 100 acre park where they are working on adding and maintaining native plants and trees only. The addition of QR codes on all trees will help to lure IT people into nature to take the self-guided tour.

Ottawa, Illinois

Took an old canal street and made an art walk, It includes pollinator gardens, a butterfly sculpture, skate park, and pollinator pillars which are 2 feet in diameter and 8 feet tall decorated with mosaics. It required 6 community building sessions to make the mosaics. The benefits were community involvement in both the creative and educational process.

Logan, Ohio

Removed the concrete sidewalks downtown and replaced them with 15 foot wide sidewalks, trees and gardens. City crews remove the old concrete added soil and planted the trees and 70-80 individuals helped to plant the gardens. This transformation is now helping to improve the downtown including a reduction in storefront vacancies.

Warrenville, Illinois

Curb Appeal Award Signs

250 Curb Appeal coroplast plastic signs (approximately 8" x 12") are distributed each summer throughout the community. Each sign has a colorful photograph and the text includes the current year, Curb Appeal Award, and Warrenville in Bloom. The signs are placed in attractive landscapes visible from the curb. Residents are allowed to keep the signs and are encouraged to maintain their gardens so they will receive a new sign each year.

Washington, Missouri

Arbor Day Celebration

An Arbor Day celebration is held in the new nature reserve. An eighth grade class plants a tree, a nursery provides information about trees, a demonstration about Emerald Ash borer is provided, maps of the new reserve and its trails are handed out, and visitors are introduced to how wood from downed trees can be used for furniture and sculpture.

Iowa City, Iowa

Container Gardening with Edibles

Container gardens with edibles are placed at key locations including city hall across from the farmers' market. Containers are planted with edible plants. One year the plantings included chard, kale, cherry tomatoes, and peppers. Another year included plants that can be used in beverages for teas and infusions. A future year is scheduled for salsa gardens.

Yazoo City, Mississippi

New Uses for an Old House

The city bought and maintains a house used as the headquarters for Yazoo City in Bloom. As expected they have their office and meeting rooms in the house. There is also a kid's corner. The grounds include community vegetable gardens, and a community orchard.

Hawthorn Woods, Illinois

Dark Sky Community Initiative. Hawthorn Woods would be the 2nd community in IL to become certified. No lights after 10 pm, unless less than 1K lumens (75W incandescent; 65W halogen; 15W CFL; 8-10W LED). Light "caps or hoods", pointing downward is one of the requirements along with no signs lit at night due to migration route of birds. Public areas are equipped with motion-sensor lights if pedestrians pass by. Amongst other positives to come from this initiative, one should be able to see the Milky Way in the night sky.

Brewton, Alabama

Attended state walkability conference as we wanted to develop a safe intersection for a busy street that was unsafe to cross. This would allow public access of separated diverse neighborhoods to the amenities of the community. We were able to install a safe crosswalk/ADA transition slopes with different textures and a lighted crossing signal.

Hendersonville, North Carolina

There is a water fountain in front of a commercial building on Main Street. They hope to convert the fountain to a splash park so kids can enjoy the downtown.

Woodinville, Washington

Getting teachers involved in teaching about the food supply and identifying the bee species that are important for pollinating food crops.

Dyer, Indiana

Dyer plans to have a memorial on Rt 30 (called the "Ideal Highway") plus landscaping for the police and fire departments.

Madison, Mississippi

Madison obtained a grant to create a Children's Memorial Garden with trees, an arbor, trellis, plus flagstones in a circle. The name of the garden is the "Too Soon Group".

Fuquay Varina, North Carolina

At the Children's Garden at Garfield Park Conservatory in Indianapolis they have large letters of the alphabet attached to a fence with a plant under each letter. The name of each plant begins with the letter above the plant.

Brewton, Alabama

Restart Recycle-After the voluntary recycling program was suspended in 2017 due to tariffs, we scrambled to find regional partners. We now have restarted the program with corrugated cardboard and #1 PET plastic bottles. We plan to add more products as residents learn and have a goal of adding glass and metals in the next six months.

Dyer, Indiana

Dyer is anticipating a change in transportation. The town council has engaged an expert to help create a comprehensive plan. We have integrated AIB into our Comprehensive Plan to support economic development and health of business in our community. Our hospital, oncology centers and a memory care facility are the backbone of Dyer. We are engaging schools to assist.

Owen, Wisconsin

One person is put in charge of watering and fertilizing baskets and displays and coordinates staff as to who will be in charge of watering.

Estes Park, Colorado

Our best idea has been a few years in the making. We started with awarding local businesses the business bright spot award honoring their efforts to beautify their store front. We expanded the program to recognize residential properties for their efforts. In our final step we created the Bright Award to showcase more than just beauty but heritage, culture and efforts to make Estes Park a better place. For example: a local artist worked with a restaurant to restore an ad painting and a school created a beehive for students.

Lawrenceburg, Kentucky

City Hall Catalyst Project-Created a landscape project that put us on the map. Beautified a prominent corner that has exposed us to a broader audience we had not been able to reach since our chapter initiation. All done by donations. City has taken ownership of their first AIB project. Since then the committee has responded dramatically in a positive way as they can now see the benefit of AIB. Used native plants and drought tolerant plants that are marked to create a learning garden.

Chicago, Illinois

Container program in Chicago neighborhood where containers were initially placed, planted and maintained. Subsequent year solicited participation from shop owners for maintenance-created a sense of ownership and pride and allowed for expansion of the program.

Mansfield, Ohio

Many groups come under the AIB umbrella. IN 2018 a subcommittee was appointed for the Daffodil Project, Daffodils being the flower of hope. A grant was received along with a private donation of bulbs-a total of 17,000 bulbs! Many volunteers, including youth, planted the bulbs at the schools, churches, 7 city parks, and 8-10 gateways.

Brewton, Alabama

Pop-up concerts at the farmers market every Saturday and the Choo-Choo Market Festival. The concerts attract shopper's downtown.

Hawthorn Woods, Illinois

Adoption of a village flower: Cheyenne Spirit (Echinacea) which is a native flower. Planted at every park sign (17) and at gateways. 2 garden centers in town put together a small pollinator kit which sold out 3 times. This was used as community branding.

Holland, Michigan

Power Company's energy savings tree planting program with the Arbor Day Foundation. Planted 300 trees. Trees are selected from a portal, then picked up and planted at no cost to homeowner. The funding comes from the power company. Stats are published on the impact of these planted trees and the energy saved. Trees are sourced through the Arbor Day Foundation.

Ridgeland, Mississippi

Planted Zinnia fields. Radio and Newspaper fields were used, the city prepped the fields, and the flowers were beautiful for passerby's to enjoy and take photos. 5 city blocks in high traffic areas were used. Volunteers planted the seeds at the end of April and the flowers were enjoyed from June through September. They received the Keep America Beautiful Award for \$2000.

Washington, Missouri

A 1970's landfill was full and was turned into a ball field. The land settled and there were no bathrooms so park maintenance became a hassle. Disc golf was considered as a reasonable alternative. Lions and Elks Clubs raised \$20,000. Now there are 9 holes that are completed and there are plans for 9 more. Area is planted with native plants and boulders (no trees). This makes use of unusable land and provides easy access from the highway.

Warrenville, Illinois

Promoting Monarch gardens in every HOA. First garden is a combination butterfly and rain garden. Used volunteers from residents and Warrenville in Bloom members to plant. Funds came from the HOA's for the materials and a commitment to maintain.

St. Charles, Illinois

Recycled Christmas lights from the community with 5 collection sites.

Castle Rock, Washington

Increasing downtown retail space-This idea, from Becky McCray, is called smoffice (small office). It looks at existing storefronts to see if they have room for a small office space or business opportunity to locate within their store. This helps share the cost of the expenses while giving another business's an opportunity to try out the entrepreneur waters. We have seen a 3% increase in businesses in our downtown without the city having to invest a dime in infrastructure. It is a win-win as services or products are available to our customer base, brings more customers into the stores and the city sees additional revenue from sales tax.

Holland, Michigan

The Holland Oz Project-to pay honor to this classic story, a living mosaic book was created and placed in one of the most visited city parks with extensive landscaping added. The collaboration of Holland in Bloom, the City of Holland, Herrick District Library, and the Holland Area Visitors Bureau, worked together to make this project a reality.

Washington, Missouri

Two times per month conducted weeding Wednesday with Master Gardeners and work with the city to address areas where there are needs. Communication is done through Facebook.

Brewton, Alabama

Took an old flowing well, planted it with plants and used it to water plants in the municipality. The plants around the well help to filter water going into the ditch and provides water play for children.

Logan, Ohio

Public Art-Sculpture added to new round about using local clay. Involving local students in creating sculptures for another round about.

Ottawa, Illinois

Restoration of an old lock along the canal with historic interpretation.

Carthage, Missouri

A junior high school class won a \$20,000 grant for their horticulture program to install hydroponic towers with vegetable and herbs in every classroom with an emphasis on reducing ADHD and improving attention.

Owen, Wisconsin

Local newspaper for a population of 940 is a community forum. The Sentinel Rural News promotes all Owen activities for free. Events call for help, judges are coming, etc. The paper is available by subscription (mail) and to purchase in stores. It is also read by outside communities and creates synergy.

Hawthorn Woods, Illinois

Wooded area adjacent to a playground cleared a deer path to create a pollinator garden. Parks and Public Works joined forces. Now forming a garden club, AIB committee, etc. to develop further.

Logan, Ohio

Pollinator Garden, Hocking Hills Visitor Center: Logan region is big tourist destination, 5 million visitors/year (more than Yellowstone). Changed grass at Visitor's Center into pollinator garden. Raised 1,267 chrysalises. Huge press coverage. The pollinator garden has become a feature in itself. Now it is 1,500 square feet, and they have brought some of the chrysalis raising inside the Visitor's Center. They have connected with Mexico, where the butterflies go, which has created an additional tourism tie-in.

Washington, Missouri

The Washington, MO Historic Preservation Commission saved a building from demolition. The council member most opposed to saving it wound up developing it. Now it houses law firms and is on the Christmas House Tour. It is 165 years old and built by German immigrants in the 1840s. It is called the Jasper Holz building.

Coshocton, OH

In Coshocton, citizens created a rent-a-planter program to improve the appearance of the downtown. The planters are designed for 4-season beauty.

Washington, Missouri

There was an old home in the historic district that was restored and the owners opened up a winery with outside seating and nice landscaping. A great addition for bringing folks downtown.

West Chicago, Illinois

In 2017 the mayor of West Chicago, IL made the “Mayor’s Monarch Pledge” and designated City Hall as a monarch waystation. The city designated 2019, the “Year of the Butterfly” with the addition of a theme for city redevelopment called, “Metamorphosis.” The Dupage County agent showed the film, “The Guardians” which featured an indigenous Mexican community – there is a 51% Hispanic population in West Chicago. They received a 1-year license to show the film. Next they commissioned an artist from Chiapas, Mexico to paint an 8’x13’ mural in town and what began as a simple monarch waystation has become a goodwill ambassador program and an economic driver for the community.

Brewton, Alabama

Brewton, AL installed a 5,000 floral planting adjacent to a concrete walkway to reduce the amount of concrete, adjacent to a mural. The mayor was supportive of the effort and so the planting has been irrigated with city funds. Now it is a successful butterfly pollinator garden and shows off the mural.