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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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America in Bloom Executive Director

America in Bloom Judges to Visit Athens, Ohio

Professional volunteer judges from the America in Bloom (AIB) national awards program will visit Athens, Ohio on July 13 and 14. This is Athens first 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.

Athens joins North Canton, Ohio; Madisonville, Kentucky; Greenwood South Carolina; and Lockport, Illinois in the 18,001 - 25,000 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

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 preservation, landscaped areas, urban forestry, floral displays, and community involvement in the municipal, commercial, and residential sectors.

The judging team members are Bruce Riggs and Alex Pearl.



Bruce Riggs



Alex Pearl

Bruce Riggs currently free-lances in horticulture and is involved in several not for profit institutions. He is also very involved in the family landscape design business with his wife Melanie Menachem Riggs who is also an AIB judge. They reside in New Rochelle, New York. He recently held the position of Curator of Science at the Bruce Museum (no relation!) of Arts & Science in Greenwich, CT.

During his 18 years at the New York Botanical Garden, Bruce was very involved with the Horticulture and Education Divisions. He administered the creation and implementation of the internationally recognized interpretation program for the NYBG.

He has recently been very involved in elementary school science and horticulture programs. He has worked on projects for the American Association of Museums and the Institute of Museum Studies. He has been very involved with Mountain Top Arboretum in Tannersville, NY, serving as President since 1998. Bruce is an avid traveler having visited numerous gardens and natural areas.

Alex Pearl, from Centerville, Ohio has been an AIB judge since the America in Bloom's inception. He is also among the group of founders. Alex is a retired horticulture educator whose career has taken him in many different directions. He has held positions in higher education, botanical gardens, private industry and in his own business. Alex retired from the State of Ohio in 2011, where he taught Vocational Horticulture for the Ohio Central School System, a charter school of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections. Alex holds horticulture degrees from the State University of New York, and New Mexico State University, a Masters in Botanical Garden Management from the University of Delaware and a Masters in Education from Ohio State University. His is an active member of various trade and amateur horticultural organizations. His long association with "in bloom" programs through America in Bloom and the Canadian program Communities in Bloom has taken him to cities across North America and Europe. He is a strong advocate of the benefits in bloom programs provide people and communities. Alex's motto is 'plants change lives'.

To date, nearly 250 communities from 45 states have participated in the program and more than 22 million people have been touched by it. Awards will be announced on October 5-7, 2017 at AIB's National Symposium & Awards, held this year in Holliston, MA.

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America in Bloom is an independent, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to promoting nationwide beautification programs and personal and community involvement through the use of flowers, plants, trees, and other environmental and lifestyle enhancements. America in Bloom provides educational programs, resources, and the challenge of a friendly competition between participating communities across the country.