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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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America in Bloom Executive Director

America in Bloom Judges to Visit Elfin Forest, CA

Professional volunteer judges from the America in Bloom (AIB) national awards program will visit Elfin Forest, California on May 8-9. This is Elfin Forest'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.

Elfin Forest joins Washtucna, WA; Castle Rock, WA; North Beach, MD; and Edmonston, MD in the Under 3,500 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 Tony Ferrara and Kristin Pategas.



Tony Ferrara



Kristin Pategas

Tony Ferrara has served 16 years on the Arroyo Grande, CA. City Council and 12 years as the City's elected mayor. Tony has held a number of municipal leadership positions including Board Chair of the San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District Board, and the County's Integrated Waste Management Board. More recently, Tony was the President of the League of California Cities, an advocacy and lobbying organization representing all 482 cities in California. Tony's passion is his 8-year involvement with Arroyo Grande in Bloom as both a volunteer and member of the AGIB Board. Arroyo Grande in Bloom is a 501(c)3 organization and is a multi-year, multi-category AIB award winner and proud member of the America In Bloom Circle of Champions. He is proficient in the development of municipal/volunteer relationships and promoting conservation and historical preservation programs. Tony was instrumental in developing and implementing a county-wide curb-side recycling program and alternative energy program to support the operation of the local sanitation district.

Kristin Pategas is a certified Landscape Designer, horticulturist, and co-owner of Hortus Oasis, a boutique landscape design firm in Winter Park, FL. Kristin and her husband, Stephen, co-authored the book *Southern Coastal Home Landscaping*, and together they write two local gardening columns. 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 and they started their business, Hortus Oasis. In her free time, Kristin practices sustainable gardening at their home, hunts for new plants, and donates her time and talents to her community and America in Bloom.

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.