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For more information, contact Laura Kunkle (614-487-1117) aib@americainbloom.org
www.americainbloom.org

America in Bloom Judges to Visit Echo, Oregon

Judges from the America in Bloom (AIB) national awards program will visit Echo, Oregon on July 14 & 15th, 2014. This is Echo's seventh entry in the America in Bloom national awards program. The town is one of 33 towns across America working on local revitalization programs with the hopes of receiving a prestigious America in Bloom national award.

Echo is competing against Castle Rock, WA; McCall, ID; and Bad Axe, MI in the less than 3,500 population category.

Participants are evaluated in the following areas: overall impression, heritage preservation, environmental efforts, urban forestry, landscapes, floral displays, and community involvement. The judges evaluate these criteria in the residential, commercial, and municipal sectors.

Judges are Jack Clasen and Melanie Riggs.



Jack Clasen



Melanie Riggs

Jack Clasen, from Raleigh North Carolina, chairs the Awards 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, 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, and featured in the October 2007, issue of Cincinnati Magazine.

Melanie Riggs, of New Rochelle, New York, began her career as a horticulturist for the Wildcliff Museum Greenhouses where she worked as the greenhouse Exhibitions Director for many years. Melanie graduated from the University of Vermont with a degree in Plant Science and Botany. She subsequently has studied Landscape Design and has graduate coursework in Botany.

Her passion for plants and gardens complements her passion for travel. Melanie has traveled extensively throughout Europe, South and Central America, Southeast Asia, North Africa and North America.

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 Award

To date, more than 220 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 October 4 at AIB’s National Symposium and Awards, held this year in Philadelphia, PA.

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America in Bloom is an independent non-profit 501c3 corporation. America in Bloom envisions communities across the country as welcoming and vibrant places to live, work, and play – benefiting from colorful plants and trees; enjoying clean environments; celebrating heritage; and planting pride through volunteerism.