



For immediate release.

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

America in Bloom Judges to Visit Combined Locks, WI

Judges from the America in Bloom (AIB) national awards program will visit Combined Locks on July 21 and 22. This is Combined Locks' first entry in the America in Bloom national awards program. The town is one of 42 towns across America working on local revitalization programs with the hopes of receiving a prestigious America in Bloom national award.

Combined Locks is competing against Independence, LA; Slippery Rock, PA; Edmonston, MD; and Castle Rock, WA in the under 3500 population category.

All 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 Tony Ferrara and Susie Stratton



Tony Ferrara



Susie Stratton

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 long 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.

Tony holds a Master's Degree in Public Administration with emphasis in the Behavioral Sciences from the University of Southern California; and a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration from the University of Redlands. He is a former faculty member for the California State University Long Beach, as

well as the University of Phoenix.

He is an active member of the America in Bloom Board of Directors and serves on the Symposium Committee of AIB.

Susie Stratton and her husband Steve are owners and operators of Stratton Greenhouses, founded by Steve's father. Today it is a retail garden center, landscape and design operation and nursery serving the northwest Ohio region.

Susie is the retail manager of the business as well as the landscape and design professional. She has a degree in Art from Albion College as well as a Masters degree in College Student Personnel. Both of her skills are used when working with communities in the formation of design ideas. She also works with community leaders in trying to take their downtown districts to a higher level of beautification.

Susie has been instrumental in the beautification of the University of Findlay campus since 2007. She was also chairman of their America in Bloom entry for 2013. They won the top Environmental Award as well as Special Mention and a 4 bloom rating.

Susie says, "My passion is bringing beauty to the world one project at a time."

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.
- Special awards
- 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 240 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 26 at AIB's National Symposium and Awards, held this year in Holland, MI.

###

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.

www.AmericanBloom.org 2103 Stella Ct. Columbus, OH. 43215