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### **America in Bloom Judges to Visit Slippery Rock, PA**

Judges from the America in Bloom (AIB) national awards program will visit Slippery Rock on June 22 and 23. This is Slippery Rock's fourth 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.

Slippery Rock is competing against Independence, LA; Edmonston, MD; Castle Rock, WA; and Combined Locks, WI 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 Leslie Pittenger.



Tony Ferrara



Leslie Pittenger

**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.

**Leslie Pittenger.** Although her “official” position is City Auditor for Belpre, her passion for the improvement of her area has inspired community volunteers. Belpre received the 2013 Outstanding Achievement Award for Community Involvement sponsored by the American Horticultural Society. As an active member of the Belpre Garden Club, she works with local students to complete environmental and beautification projects. Currently serving her second term as Auditor, she has received the Ohio Auditor of State Award for exemplary financial reporting. She serves on the board of directors for the Belpre Alumnae Association and the Belpre Area Community Development Foundation. She graduated from the University of Georgia, and was a business owner for ten years. Leslie believes in – and has experienced - the value of AIB for the benefits it can bring to the well-being and pride of small towns across 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.
- 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.

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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.

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