2016 Annual Report
Our Vision:

America in Bloom envisions communities across the country as welcoming and vibrant places to live, work, and play – benefitting from colorful plants and trees; enjoying clean environments; celebrating heritage; and planting pride through volunteerism.

Our Mission:

America in Bloom’s mission is to promote nationwide beautification through education and community involvement by encouraging the use of flowers, plants, trees, and other environmental and lifestyle enhancements.
Dear Friends and Supporters,

2016 was an important year for America in Bloom as we celebrated our 15th anniversary. This important anniversary year set some important milestones for America in Bloom.

- The National Awards Program once again reached communities throughout America – 39 of them this year – encouraging them to focus on the 6 critical criteria that are the foundation of America in Bloom – Floral Displays, Urban Forestry, Landscaped Areas, Heritage Preservation, Environmental Efforts, and Overall Impression.

- Thousands of residents in each of these communities have been involved in transforming where they live to a place they love.

- Our team of 26 professional judges offered their time pro bono to visit each of our communities to discover the remarkable ways in which they have “planted pride.” Our judges provided more than 8,400 volunteer hours to the national awards program in 2016.

- Our annual AIB educational Symposium brought together nearly 200 leaders from 85 communities across America and provided best ideas and inspiration for new programs and projects.

- The new online auction was added to our already successful silent auction to generate revenue and offer unique opportunities to visit AIB communities and buy unique horticultural products.

- The “Best Ideas Annual” was published yet again with the best ideas collected in 2016 – a terrific resource for communities everywhere.

- Our partnership with CN Railroad delivered grants through their EcoConnexions from the Ground Up program totaling more than $201,000 to 9 communities situated along the CN Railroad lines.

- Our presence at the National League of Cities conference, AmericanHort’s Cultivate Show, and the Philadelphia Flower Show have brought the message of AIB to an ever-increasing audience of community leaders and horticulture industry leaders.

Organizationally there were a number of giant leaps forward. The management of America in Bloom has now been transferred to Second Wind Management with none other than Laura Kunkle at the helm. She was present as America in Bloom was formed 15 years ago and continues to provide thoughtful, forward thinking, spirited leadership. We are so fortunate to have Laura leading our important work. Edith Makra of the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus in Chicago is now leading our AIB fundraising efforts and has added a program of crowdfunding within our AIB community to our existing sponsorship program. Leslie Pittenger, AIB Judge, Board member, and Chair of the Belpre in Bloom program, has taken on the leadership of the AIB National Awards Program. Linda Hart, AIB Board member and active participant in the Holland in Bloom program, has taken on the leadership of the AIB annual Symposium. We are so fortunate that these leaders and many others have come forward with their professional expertise, precious time, and leadership experience to bring us to new heights in what we can offer communities and community leaders across America.

This 2016 Annual Report offers insight into the impact America in Bloom has had and continues to have on communities across America. It demonstrates that the efforts being made benefit these communities with enhanced quality of life, sustained economic vitality, and pride in the overall beauty and uniqueness of their communities. For those of you who help us in these efforts – AIB Board members, AIB judges, AIB community leaders, AIB sponsors and donors – we cannot thank you enough. Thank you!

To a great new 2017!

Katy Moss Warner, President
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America in Bloom by the Numbers

245 communities 40 states
954 individual judging visits by 98 judges
More than 22 million lives touched
More than 300 million media impressions
More than 13,000 volunteer hours visiting communities, writing evaluations, and supporting AIB towns and cities.
Good Things are Growing in Greendale, Indiana

Call them stream of consciousness success stories: Problems offer possibilities that become plans that propel progress that produces pride. That’s the way we think in AIB-centric Greendale, Indiana.

Case in point: Take an eyesore of a rundown dairy mart dealing mainly in lottery tickets and candy-wraper litter situated across a parking lot from the city utility offices. Factor in the mayor, clerk treasurer, and her assistant operating out of a second-story non-ADA compliant office with a leaky roof three blocks away. Problems offer possibilities.

Dairy Mart owes back taxes. Sheriff’s sale offers a progressive city council an opportunity to acquire the ugly duckling for little more than “egg money.” Heroic city workers gear up and gut the building. Sympathetic engineering firm partners with city to hatch drawings for new offices and meeting rooms with state-of-the art technology and environmentally-friendly features. Possibilities become plans.

Local builder comes in on time and within budget. AIB committee invests in large planters to span street side length of building and enhance front façade. Garden Club develops planting scheme, buys floral material, and installs it. AIB water girl adds the new planters to her photo-op watering repertoire. Civic engagement is looking good. Plans propel progress.

That ugly duckling developed into a swan that spread its wings to welcome residents and state officials in time to celebrate the 200th Anniversary of the State of Indiana. Everything went swimmingly. Progress produces pride.

The stars line up for projects such as these when you keep your focus, and Greendale has been focused on the America in Bloom program since 2005. We have story after story of achievements large and small, because we now frame our thinking around the potential for improvement that AIB encourages by looking at ourselves through the lens of the AIB criteria. We still have stars in our eyes after 12 consecutive years of participation.

America in Bloom has become a part of OUR story, Greendale’s story. The continuing narrative of our successes through collaborative effort gave the AIB Committee a seat at the table and a big voice in developing the City of Greendale 2013 Comprehensive Plan – and it’s not a document that just gathers dust on a shelf in a closet. We use it every day as we work toward a better future for our kids and grandkids.

It’s hard to quantify what our efforts have meant, but Economic Director Al Abdon is quick to point out, “Success in attracting new business, new residents, and new energy are, in part, direct results of the innovative efforts and quality of life impact that America in Bloom has had for Greendale.”
Ironton, Ohio:
Planting Pride with America in Bloom

By Kristin Pategas, AIB Judge

America in Bloom’s collaborative national awards program has helped hundreds of communities realize their potential in becoming thriving places of work, play and living. Ironton, Ohio is just one of the many towns that have embraced America in Bloom principles and ideas to generate programs that provide the motivation and energy to plant pride in their community.

Ironton is a community that has experienced many economic setbacks throughout its history, from the 1970s with the closing of numerous industries due to the implementation of environmental standards, the exodus of jobs overseas, low employment, and finally the city’s fall into bankruptcy in 1982. Ironton, though, was true to its name and stood strong through these obstacles and used the promise of flowers to hearten its residents and create a symbol of rebirth. From its initial Downtown Clean-Up Days and spring plantings, Ironton discovered a path to raise spirits and rally support.

Kudos to sister America in Bloom community Gallipolis, OH for sharing with Ironton the guiding principles and resources of the America in Bloom program. Nine years ago Ironton in Bloom (IIB) planted the seed that has been nurtured by city government, businesses, and residents to become the catalyst for new business growth, improved property values, and a sense of pride. Ironton has seen its property values increase, derelict commercial properties redeveloped into thriving businesses, and the downtown beautified with hanging baskets, containers, decorative street furnishings, and weed-free sidewalks. This transformation not only benefits businesses and home owners, but encourages Ironton to present its best to visitors, investors, potential residents, and new businesses. Ironton has a number of future projects in the furnace: the Riverfront Park, a gateway for the new bridge over the Ohio River and the Iron Furnace Trail.

Ironton in Bloom knew in order for their dreams of a transformed community to come true, they needed to develop programs that guaranteed success, from design to funding, implementation and on-going maintenance. Too often such beautification projects in the past failed due to lack of funds and maintenance strategies. Today, 9 years after its inception, IIB has an annual $50,000 budget for their floral displays supported by the city, local businesses, civic organizations, and individuals. Members of IIB continue to work with the city to improve and expand Ironton’s design standards to include floral and landscape requirements. They have also developed the OPT Program: Opportunity, Partnership and Teamwork, that recognizes sponsor donations and continued monetary support.
Ironton has embraced its heritage by designating three residential historic districts and restoring two historic sites for reuse: the Ro-Na Theater and the Veterans Memorial Hall. Historic home owners and churches annually open for tours and the Lawrence County History Museum provides docents in period costume and character.

Ironton in Bloom has developed an Annual Inventory Program where volunteers walk the city’s streets each spring assessing cleanliness and maintenance needs including litter, weeds, sign maintenance, storm drain blockage, and sidewalk repairs. These reports are passed on to the respective city departments to address as time and budget allow during the fiscal year.

Ironton is proof of the benefits of implementing America in Bloom’s framework for improvements.

Frontier president Steven Hoekstra was quoted in area press saying the purchase represents a $1.5 million investment and the Brewton site was selected because the city’s “quality of life is great” and

AIB Means Business in Brewton, Alabama

By Linda Cromer, AIB Judge

Brewton, Alabama is a model of the pride and progress that typifies America in Bloom communities. Participating in the AIB program since 2014, Brewton demonstrates that when it comes to making America in Bloom work for a community, “taking care of business” the AIB way provides opportunities for businesses to take care of you.

When Frontier Manufacturing and Engineering Technologies (headquartered in Long Beach, California) started looking in summer 2016 for a production center to serve a Pensacola, Florida GE plant, contestants started lining up. Frontier manufactures high-tech aerospace, energy, and architectural components and was looking for a location within a 60-mile radius of Pensacola, prioritizing relative privacy to protect proprietary processes and the availability of a quality workforce. After considering candidate communities and working with the Coastal Gateway Economic Development Alliance, Frontier officials visited a spec building in Brewton’s industrial park but instead chose to invest in an adjacent and larger pre-owned 55,000 sq. ft. facility.

Frontier president Steven Hoekstra was quoted in area press saying the purchase represents a $1.5 million investment and the Brewton site was selected because the city’s “quality of life is great” and
the local work ethic “outstanding.” That means 25 new jobs in Brewton with an expectation of 200 within 5 years. A winning workforce is the direct result of creating communities where talented folks want to live.

Brewton’s burgeoning economic development isn’t unique to the industrial park. Forty-seven properties dating to the 19th and 20th centuries were added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1982, but many sat empty or under-utilized for too many years. Community leaders made a bold move and literally “turned around” a block of empty historic buildings that directly face a noisy, dirty rail track by creating an attractive, accessible boardwalk behind the buildings and essentially recreating new main pedestrian entrances. Façade-improvement incentives and America in Bloom efforts have enhanced appealing and appropriate new storefronts with lush landscaping and floral displays, and there is a steady stream of patrons for bustling businesses. Stroll down the boardwalk and visit a friendly provider to purchase some personal-injury insurance before stepping into a neighboring yoga studio. Unwind yourself from the lotus position and ease on next door for a latte to reward yourself for your exertions.

Preparation….perspiration….payoff. Personal and commercial development have a lot in common.

Convenient sidewalks connect the boardwalk to other businesses in the historic district, residential neighborhoods, and recreational facilities. Since financial incentives and America in Bloom-fostered improvements have been encouraging development in the historic district, seven structures have been restored and reused and three more are in the pipeline. Brewton, Alabama, twice named one of the 100 Best Small Towns in America, just keeps getting better.

Wonderfully preserved, restored, and repurposed buildings; state-of-the-art educational facilities; an expansive and expanding park system; attractive horticultural features including floral displays, landscapes, and trees; and a myriad of festivals and community events add up to an enviable quality of life for the residents of Brewton, Alabama. America in Bloom participation has been a vital component in the process.
America in Bloom is proud to continue its partnership with CN’s banner program entitled “EcoConnexions From the Ground Up,” which provides funding of up to $25,000 for the greening of America in Bloom communities along its rail lines in the U.S. Projects address local issues and provide a means for engagement at the local level since community groups and service clubs will join AIB in support of the projects. The projects also address concerns related to water conservation, stewardship, and environmentally-friendly transportation.

As one of North America’s leading railroads, CN’s network extends to three North American coasts, passing through a wide range of urban and rural communities. As part of the CN EcoConnexions From the Ground Up program, CN is encouraging communities along the rail corridor to take environmental action by improving their communities through natural landscaping, groundcover improvement, floral displays, and healthy urban forests.

Nine communities selected in 2016 will receive grants totaling more than $201,000 to create sustainable community greening and beautification projects. Local matches from recipients will bring the total investment to more than $5 million.

### 2016 CN Grant Recipients

**Decatur, Illinois**
In effort to replace the trees that have been lost due to weather and disease as well as improve the biodiversity of the urban forest and beautify the community, focus has been on the Park Reforestation Program. The Decatur Parks Foundation with the help of Archer Daniels Midland Company, Beautify Decatur, Grow Decatur, Decatur City Limitless and local neighborhood groups will plant 240 trees. Special attention will be given to parks that are in the inner city and along city corridors.

**Duluth, Minnesota**
The grant will help to restore over 88 acres of forest disturbed by invasive common buckthorn and with another approximately 40 acres of selectively-cut aspen and pine forest. Most of the trees planted will create healthier habitats left from buckthorn removal.

**Detroit, Michigan**
Grant funding will support implementation of a comprehensive landscape stewardship plan on vacant properties in a quarter-square mile area of the Fitzgerald neighborhood in the city. The project intends to increase tree canopy and green infrastructure to improve the environmental services in the neighborhood. It will also improve social, economic, public health, and ecological benefits with the creation of green job and career opportunities for neighborhood residents, who will be trained to install and maintain the landscape treatments. The project is the first of its kind at this scale in Detroit and is intended to serve as a model that can be replicated throughout other distressed neighborhoods.
Ferndale, Michigan
The city will enhance the appearance of an area on the east side along an active railway corridor. The goal is to beautify currently vacant private property and make it publicly accessible. The new public space will connect with, and expand the neighborhood’s linear park and walkway to the south. Expansion of Fair Park will transform the abandoned lot from blight into an area filled with additional trees, flowers and a beautified berm.

Joliet, Illinois
The City of Joliet is losing thousands of trees due to infestation by the Emerald Ash Borer. This grant will provide funding to improve the urban forest in the Forest Park neighborhood. Through the Forest Park Community Center, residents will be engaged in the project and taught how to identify, plant, mulch, water, and correctly prune newly planted community trees.

Lockport, Illinois
Grant money will be used to remove dead trees, shrubs, and invasive plants. The finished project will provide a beautiful area for people to sit and will make a beautiful gateway to the bike/walking path to the I&M Canal.

Mundelein, Illinois
The grant will be used to purchase numerous trees. The project site is very visible to anyone traveling to the downtown area and will provide a more beautiful green space. Boy Scouts and the Mundelein Community Connection will assist with raking, leveling, and planting.

Pleasant Ridge, Michigan
The project includes beautification, environmental sustainability, and recreation components to Gainsboro Park, a 7.5-acre public park that extends along the railway. The project enjoys support from a broad coalition of community stakeholders including the City Commission, Recreation Commission, Environmental Committee, and community gardeners. The plans for the park improvement project were developed through a charrette design process led by consulting landscape architects. Over 200 people participated in the park planning process, and the resulting plan reflects broad community input.

Ranier, Minnesota
The new gateway will highlight the beauty of the area with a new public space landscaped with ponds, fountains, fields of wildflowers, colorful native trees and shrubs, and a bird watching trail. The effort will draw more visitors and dollars into the area and create a better image so that the city can compete for new businesses and residents.
Top row:
Scenes from Arroyo Grande, CA.

Middle row:
Edmonston, MD receives recognition for their efforts.

Bottom row:
Scenes from Arroyo Grande, CA.
Symposium & Awards Program

The 2016 America in Bloom Symposium & Awards Program was held in Arroyo Grande, California, our first symposium held on the Pacific Coast. Strong educational sessions with dynamic speakers, outstanding networking and idea-sharing opportunities, and learning tours provided take-home solutions that attendees can implement in their own communities. Attendees enjoyed the expanded pre-symposium activities, which included tours of Hearst Castle, Point San Luis Lighthouse, and nearby AIB award-winning community Morro Bay.

There continues to be strong interest from communities to host the symposium in future years. Each location promises exciting venues that showcase the power of working within the America in Bloom framework to create great communities of all sizes.

Save the Date:
2017 America In Bloom Symposium & Awards Program
October 5-7, 2017 in Holliston, MA.
An AIB community steeped in history, Holliston has received numerous Heritage Preservation Awards as well as achieving honors in their Population Category. The symposium and awards program offers a unique opportunity to gain insight into the many aspects critical to improving quality of life in communities, and will include opportunities to visit special historical venues.

Save the Date:
2018 America in Bloom Symposium & Awards Program
September 27-29 in Lexington, KY.
Great Ideas and Resources

Besides providing our participants with written evaluations that help guide their progress, America in Bloom offers resources including an informative website, social media, unique books, brochures about the benefits of plants, and signs for our participants.

**AmericaInBloom.org**
A trusted resource for details about AIB’s national awards program, press releases, news, benefits of plants, grant opportunities, and more.

**Webinars**
Free, online, on-demand webinars cover topics related to harnessing the America in Bloom spirit in communities around the country.

**YouTube Channel**
Our own YouTube channel features videos created by participating towns telling the story of the benefits of America in Bloom participation.

**Social Media**
We use blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn to connect people to the benefits of improving quality of life through attention to horticulture, heritage preservation, environmental awareness, and community involvement.

**E-Newsletter**
Our monthly email newsletter reaches more than 20,000 people with tips, resources, and success stories.

**Reaching Out**
To grow our national awards and educational programs, we participated in these national events:

- **National League of Cities conference** where we met mayors and city officials.
- **Cultivate** where we connected with people in the horticulture industry.
- **Philadelphia Flower Show**, where we met people of all demographics who are interested in creating a better quality of life in their own community.

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Arroyo Grande in Bloom Committee
AIB Startup Kit
To make participation easy, an exciting turnkey Startup Kit includes participation brochures; a CD with customizable presentations, posters, postcards; sample evaluation form; ideas and suggestions for a local contest involving the entire community, and more. It’s everything participants need to build momentum.

City Signs
Thanks to a grant from the Diane Clasen Memorial Fund, we are able to provide each participant with a large metal AIB sign to demonstrate their involvement in the awards program. Diane was an AIB judge since 2001 and was the first to achieve judging 100 towns. The fund was created with donations from her family, friends, and colleagues after her passing.

AIB Bookshelf
We continue to add to our lineup of book offerings.

*Perspectives on Planting Pride* is a 156-page retrospective of AIB’s past president Dr. Marvin N. Miller’s thoughts on community, plants, people, and how horticulture can improve lives.

Our popular *Ten Years of Best Ideas* book with more than 2,000 ideas and photos has 3 companion pieces. *Best Ideas AIB Annual 2014, 2015, and 2016* showcase the best ideas from program participants in their own words and special mentions from the judges.

AIB PowerPoints
Download from the AIB website and customize to share the AIB message with others.

Discover the Surprising Side of Plants
This 12-page brochure explains why and how plants go way beyond “pretty” to enhance your home, your work, your town, and even your friendships. Learn what plants do for you where you live, work, and play. Printed versions of the brochure are available from AIB or an electronic version can be downloaded free from the AIB website (www.AmericaInBloom.org). A free companion PowerPoint presentation can be downloaded from the website so that anyone can share this powerful message with groups of all kinds.
Tourists Love Visiting Cities with Colorful Hanging Baskets, Window Boxes, Containers, and Landscapes.

Tourism is a powerful economic driver for city managers. Cost effective and easy to maintain Wave® Petunias provide instant, season-long solutions for municipal streetscapes and public spaces.

Thank you to the Ball Horticultural Company for its long-time support of AIB. This industry-leading company has worked hand-in-hand with AIB since Day 1 to help transform communities.

Join Ball by becoming an annual supporter of AIB.
Thank You!

Our gratitude and heartfelt thanks to our national sponsors, symposium sponsors, and media partners who continue to invest in our mission. Our progress and success is a direct result of your generous support.

**Platinum Elite**
- Ball Horticultural Company
- CN – Canadian National Railway

**Platinum**
- Blackmore Company

**Gold**
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- Greenhouse Product News
- Greenhouse Management
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- Garden Center
- Green Profit
- GrowerTalks
- Lawn & Garden Retailer
- Neal Mast & Sons Greenhouses
- Pennsylvania Horticultural Society

**Silver**
- American Horticultural Society
- Bartlett Tree Experts
- Bob’s Market & Greenhouses
- Dosatron International
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- GrowIt!
- iHort – International Horticultural Technologies
- KBW Horticultural Supply
- Longwood Antique Woods
- PlantsMap
- SiteOne
- Vaughan’s Horticulture
- Wojo’s Greenhouse
- Vis Seed Company

“Our direct line of business at Greeley and Hansen is providing engineering and consulting services for water-related infrastructure projects. Ultimately, our firm collaborates with municipalities to create better urban environments by developing sustainable water resources programs that benefit their communities. Our focus on environmental sustainability is strongly aligned with America in Bloom’s mission to improve communities as well, and we’re very proud to support their important efforts as a national sponsor.”

*John C. Robak*
President and Chief Operating Officer, Greeley and Hansen
Thank you to our raffle ticket contributors

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Ball Seed Company
Gifts from sponsors are highly leveraged by the efforts of our judges who each donate nearly a month or more to personally visit participating towns, meet community leaders, write evaluations, and provide ongoing coaching. Our dedicated all-volunteer board donates thousands of hours annually to promote and implement the program.

**2016 Board of Directors**

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Auctions Create Excitement for America in Bloom

In 2016 AIB held two auctions, its traditional silent auction held in conjunction with the annual symposium and awards program, and new for 2016 was an online auction.

Nearly 70 items were donated to the silent auction and raised more than $7,000. Our thanks to those generous donors and buyers for supporting this always-popular symposium activity.

New for 2016 was the online auction. Launched in September, the auction featured exciting destinations for travel, plants, and other horticultural products, one-of-a-kind experiences, artwork, and AIB mentoring sessions. Nearly $9,000 was raised in the online auction, and we are thankful for those who donated interesting items that allowed AIB to extend its fundraising reach.

Attendees could bid on nearly 70 items during this year’s silent auction.

Eureka Springs, Arkansas, was one of the many exciting travel destinations available in the online auction.

One lucky winner got the chance to appear on the TV show “Growing a Greener World.”

Star Roses was one of several horticultural companies that donated plants to the auction.
SINCE 2001  MAKING AMERICA BLOOM

Planting Pride in Our Communities

America in Bloom
Financial Overview

In 2016, we had revenue and in-kind contributions of $623,846. This includes the thousands of hours donated by our judges, volunteers, and other in-kind donations.

America in Bloom is an independent, 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. All contributions to America in Bloom are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.
Giving to America in Bloom
America in Bloom is committed to working with corporate partners and strategic allies to improve the quality of life in American towns and cities. By partnering with America in Bloom, you join a group of well-respected companies and a network of committed citizens dedicated to planting pride in their communities.

We look forward to working with you. Contact our office for sponsorship details. Your contributions are tax-deductible.