



Stephen & Kristin Pategas

in the garden *by Stephen and Kristin Pategas*

March 2015 Winter Park Blooms

Winter Park took the plunge and entered the America In Bloom national competition in 2013 and 2014. They will also enter this year with judging to take place again in early May. America in Bloom was started in 2001 and hundreds of cities in 40 states have entered. The benefits include encouraging cooperation among government, businesses and residents and a detailed evaluation with many recommendations. For communities that want to be the best they can be, America In Bloom is a valuable community development tool.

The Keep Winter Park Beautiful and Sustainable Board sponsors the entries and Stephen, as a member of the board, leads the effort. Our local effort is called Winter Park Blooms. Communities in the competition are judged along with three other communities within their population range which varies slightly from year to year. In 2014 the other three cities included Henderson County, NC; Holland, MI; and Santa Paula, CA. Each community is scored in the areas of Municipal, Business and Resi-

dential in the following criteria: Environmental Efforts, Urban Forestry, Heritage Preservation, Landscaped Areas, Floral Display and Overall Impression. Community involvement is also considered in each criterion so the residents' participation is critical.

Prior to the judges' arrival a Community Profile is created that provides background on the six criteria. Following a detailed itinerary the judges are toured around Winter Park during two very full days. Numerous locations are visited (how many of these have you visited?): Morse Museum of American Art, Winter Park Historical Association Museum, Central Park and Park Avenue, Casa Feliz, Winter Park Public Library, Albin Polasek Museum and Sculpture Garden with the relocated Capen House, Rollins College campus, Mead Botanical Garden, Hannibal Square Heritage Center, Cady Way Trail and Ward Park, Kraft Azalea Garden and numerous neighborhoods.

Executive directors, staff and volunteers from these organizations and the City of Winter Park provide presentations and answer questions. In 2014, City of Winter Park employees Kris

Stenger and Lindsey Hayes helped tour while sharing their expertise about the City. The Alford Inn provided complimentary accommodations and the Winter Park Chamber of Commerce arranged complimentary meals at Park Plaza Gardens and Marlow's Tavern. For a special treat for the judges, our neighbors Ann and Bill Legg piloted their boat for a magical evening tour on the chain of lakes.

Along with winning three awards including 'Best In Population Category,' each year Winter Park receives comments and suggestions from the judges. They are reviewed and shared with participating organizations. Having expert eyes view our

community and offer recommendations is enlightening.

If you wish to join the Winter Park Blooms committee, or volunteer, please contact us. Making sure your homes and yards are looking their best is a great contribution. If you are traveling nationally, look to see if there are any cities that are competing (www.americainbloom.org). They, along with Winter Park, will be looking particularly spiffy as their judging dates approach.



Pictured at left: Sue Foreman instructs the judges at Mead Botanical Gardens while Lindsey Hayes looks on. Top of page: (Left to right) Kris Stenger, the judges, Patrick Chapin and Debra Hendrickson at the Winter Park Chamber of Commerce. Large photo: City Forester Dru Dennison (center) speaks with a judge at Central Park. Photos by Stephen G. Pategas, Hortus, Oasis.