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EDITORIAL AMERICA IN BLOOM

Springfield is in full bloom for contest judges

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7:41 PM Wednesday, July 7, 2010

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If you drive around Springfield this week you are going to see some outstanding sights. There are flowers everywhere. Look up at the ledges of the City Hall building overlooking the plaza. Check out the planters in front of the police department substation on Johnny Lytle Boulevard.

Drive around downtown and notice the extra care and feeding that the landscaping has received in front of Covenant Presbyterian Church, the News-Sun's own building and the U.S. Post Office.

Many of these displays are with us year in and year out. But the beauty of our community is on display this week more than ever to showcase this community for two judges with the America In Bloom competition.

Entering Springfield into this competition was the brainchild of Pam Corle Bennett, a horticulture educator at the Ohio State University Extension office in Clark County and garden columnist for the News-Sun.

Bennett has seen the motivating power of a good competition, and thought this community would rise to the challenge.

The judges are spending today and tomorrow here, and giving the Springfield in Full Bloom panel a report by the end of summer on what they think works, what doesn't, and what could be improved.

America in Bloom not just a landscaping competition. The community that buys the most flowers would win that. This competition is meant to judge each community on what it does with all of the assets it has — buildings, architecture, parks, quiet places. Does it take full advantage of what it has?

In many ways, Springfield does. The judges will see many outstanding sights: some of the homes on East High Streets and South Fountain Avenue, the grounds of Wittenberg University and Ferncliff Cemetery, the Westcott House.

Local businesses have added nice touches to their properties.

The area's outdoor amenities are a rightful source of regional pride — the Hollandia gardens, the outstanding bike paths, even the recently-restored Hartman Rock Garden.

The kayaking feature they will see — a smart addition to this community along Buck Creek spearheaded by John and Kevin Loftis — isn't even open yet and is already attracting visitors. The main concern now is that it might prove to be too popular.

And, along the way, the tour will pass houses that are not in great shape. The judges are wisely being taken on a warts-and-all tour.

There is no doubt that some property owners would love to accentuate their homes, but can't afford to do much. Others don't seem to care much.

But it is the sum of the parts that makes up our community.

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