

Barton Russell & Associates

**** Media Advisory ****

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Barton Russell retained as *America's Best Communities* "Resident Expert" Music Star Vince Gill is ABC's spokesman

Longboat Key, FL – Barton Russell was retained as an expert-in-residence and advisor to the America's Best Communities program. Country music star Vince Gill serves as ABC's spokesman. Frontier Communications, Inc. launched this \$10 million initiative in September 2014. The program aims to revitalize small towns and cities across America. The DISH Network, CoBank and The Weather Channel the other major sponsors of the three-year, rural economic development competition.

Over 400 communities submitted ABC contest applications, which were reviewed and ranked by a panel of 6 expert panelists, one of whom was Barton Russell. ABC Panelists carefully evaluated each of the contest submissions and selected 50 communities to take the next step toward becoming America's Best Communities. According to ABC representatives, "Each quarter-finalist community will be awarded \$50,000 to develop comprehensive strategies to accelerate the revival of their local economies and improve quality of life. Fifteen semi-finalists will be picked out of the 50 quarter-finalists to attend the America's Best Communities summit in the spring of 2016, when they will get a chance to present their proposals.

Eight selected finalists will then receive \$100,000 each to get started on implementing their plan. The contest will end in 2017 with three communities that have the most innovative and effective plans being awarded a total of \$6 million.

(Funding will be provided) for projects that range from healthy living initiatives and creating green spaces, to housing development, transportation enhancements, business incubators, and infrastructure improvements to help communities grow and prosper."

Maggie Wilderotter, chairman and CEO of Frontier Communications, said in a statement that they believe their investments...will have a multiplier effect as communities embrace opportunities for revitalization.