



For More Information:
Rick Dungey
636-449-5071 (voice)
636-449-5051 (fax)
dungey@realchristmastrees.org (email)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

White House Blue Room Christmas Tree Presented

Chesterfield, MO - (November 25, 2011) – Like many other households on this day after Thanksgiving, the White House started Christmas decorating with a fresh Christmas Tree. A beautiful 19-foot-tall balsam fir grown on a farm near Neshkoro, Wis., will be the official White House Christmas Tree on display in the Blue Room, serving as the centerpiece of the White House decorations.

The Blue Room Christmas Tree was presented to First Lady Michelle Obama by Christmas Tree growers Sue and Tom Schroeder. The Schroeders earned this honor by winning the National Christmas Tree Association's (NCTA) national Christmas Tree contest held in August 2011 in Huron, Ohio, and becoming Grand Champion.

The Blue Room Christmas Tree was handpicked by White House Superintendent of Grounds Dale Haney and Jim Adams with the National Park Service on Oct. 3, 2011. The tree was planted by the Schroeders 18 years ago and got a “thumbs up” – literally – from the First Lady during the presentation ceremony that included a horse-drawn wagon carrying the tree up to the North Portico.

The Schroeders have entered trees from their farm in the national contest before. To qualify for the national contest, growers must first win their state / regional competitions. 2011 was the fourth year the Schroeders had done that and entered a tree in the national contest. Finally winning the contest and earning Grand Champion status validated their hard work and persistence.

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“I’m happy with the tree they selected, and I hope the First Family and all the visitors to the White House enjoy the tree we grew here on our small family farm,” said Sue Schroeder. Each holiday season, nearly 100,000 visitors to the White House see the Blue Room Tree.

In 1976, Tom and Sue Schroeder had just purchased a house and small shop on a very busy commercial corner in Neenah, Wis. Since December was a slow time for their auto upholstery business, Tom thought selling Christmas Trees might be a good way to supplement their income. The couple’s son, James, has a favorite saying that best describes how the family approaches both their business and personal lives – “Overdo it or do it over.” In other words, if you’re going to do something, try to do the best you possibly can the first time. So the Schroeders did just that. And now they have done something very few other tree farms have done -- provide one to the White House.

“What a thrill this was,” said Schroeder. “It’s such an honor to represent all the family farms in the U.S. that grow Christmas Trees. We work hard to plant, nourish and harvest great trees for families. But it’s a labor of love, because a fresh Christmas Tree means so much to so many people. And now they have one in the White House too.”

The White House Floral Department staff and volunteers will decorate the tree and all the rooms according to a theme selected by the First Lady.

Members of the National Christmas Tree Association have presented the official White House Christmas Tree for display in the Blue Room since 1966. For Real Christmas Tree selection and care tips, or to find a Christmas Tree farm or lot in your area, visit www.realchristmastrees.org.

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