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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Operation Evergreen: Agriculture Department Joins Growers to Send Christmas Trees to Troops

REYNOLDSBURG, Ohio (Nov. 14, 2007) – American service men and women will observe the holidays with a live, Ohio tree thanks to Operation Evergreen, an event held yesterday at the Ohio Department of Agriculture’s Reynoldsburg campus and organized by the Ohio Christmas Tree Association (OCTA).

“Family and tradition are a significant part of the holiday season, and we hope these trees will provide strength and spirit to the troops who cannot be at home for the holidays,” said Ohio Agriculture Director Robert Boggs. “The hundreds of trees and ornaments collected reflect the thousands of heartfelt wishes sent to the men and women serving our country.”

Trees were donated by Ohio Christmas tree growers from around the state. Operation Evergreen collected, packed and shipped 300 Christmas trees to soldiers serving in Iraq, Kuwait, and Afghanistan. In addition to the trees, local school children, churches, and veteran’s groups donated decorations so that each military unit receiving a tree has everything needed for the holidays.

Department nursery inspectors examined each tree to ensure they were free of pests and diseases before issuing a phytosanitary certificate required for international shipment. FedEx is providing the international transport of the trees to the military units.

“Hopefully, the trees can bring a little bit of home to our troops who will be spending the holidays away from their families,” said Amy Galehouse, Ohio Christmas tree grower and coordinator of the event.

In addition to Operation Evergreen, a national Trees for Troops program will collect over 16,000 trees to be delivered to the families of military personnel. FedEx will provide transportation of the donated trees to over 38 military bases.

Operation Evergreen is sponsored by OCTA with the help of the Christmas SPIRIT Foundation and FedEx Corporation. OCTA has been delivering Christmas trees to troops stationed overseas since 1995.

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Note to Editor: High resolution photos have been posted online.
Downloading instructions and cutlines are attached or are available by calling 614-752-9817.