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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **White House Staff Selects Blue Room Christmas Tree**

Chesterfield, MO - (October 20, 2009) -- A beautiful Douglas-fir from Shepherdstown, W.V., will be the official White House Christmas Tree this year.

The Blue Room Christmas Tree will be officially presented to First Lady Michelle Obama by Christmas Tree growers Eric and Gloria Sundback. The Sundbacks earned this honor by winning the National Christmas Tree Association's (NCTA) national Christmas Tree contest held in August 2009 in Chattanooga, Tenn., and becoming Grand Champion.

The Blue Room Christmas Tree was handpicked by Director of the Executive Residence and White House Chief Usher Stephen Rochon and Superintendent of Grounds Dale Haney on Oct. 20, 2009. The tree, which was planted by the Sundbacks in 1996, will be cut in late November and sent to Washington, D.C.

Eric and Gloria are no strangers to the White House Christmas experience. This will be the fourth time that the couple has won the contest and presented a tree to the First Lady. "It is always an exciting time and it is interesting to meet all the First Ladies," Gloria says.

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The couple first began growing Christmas Trees in 1956 in western Pennsylvania. In 1959, Eric's work as a landscape architect took them to the Washington, D.C., area where they began a search for land to continue their Christmas Tree farming on the best soil possible, settling near Shepherdstown, W.V. In 1967, Eric and Gloria started retail lots in Bethesda, Md. and Washington, D.C., which they operated for 40 years before passing the retail side of their business to two veteran employees. Both in their 80s, Eric and Gloria continue development of the seed orchard part of their farm.

The presentation to the White House is tentatively scheduled to take place on Nov. 27, 2009. The tree will be set up in the Blue Room later that day, where the White House Floral Department staff and volunteers will decorate it.

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](http://www.realchristmastrees.org).

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