

NCTA Update – January 13, 2012

Register now for CT Plus! Make plans now to join us in San Antonio, Feb. 18-19, for the annual CT Plus meeting. This year's theme is "The Power of Story" and we'll be looking at the story of the 2011 sales season, the stories consumers tell about Real Christmas Trees and how to effectively create and share the unique story of your business.

In addition to section discussions and networking opportunities, we'll look at the results of the 2011 Harris Interactive consumer poll, review legislative successes and challenges for the coming year, discuss planning for the future of your business and more. All 2011 Trees for Troops participants will also be recognized at this event.

The room block at the Menger Hotel closes on Jan. 27, so reserve your room today by calling 800/345-9285 and asking for the NCTA group rate of \$115/night.

You can download a registration form from the NCTA website or call 636/449-5070 for more information.

In 2011, Trees for Troops delivered more than 19,000 Real Christmas Trees (our biggest year yet) to military families across the United States and around the world. In doing so, the program also reached an important milestone – 100,000 trees delivered since 2005. Thank you to everyone who helped to make this program a success!

The program received a great deal of media coverage this year, and thank-you letters and photos continue to pour in from recipients. Be sure to visit the Trees for Troops website (www.treesfortroops.org) or our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/trees4troops) to see these stories from families who were touched by the program.

All growers/retailers who donated trees will receive a thank-you letter and recognition in the *American Christmas Tree Journal*, on the NCTA website and at the CT Plus meeting.

If you collected donations on behalf of the Foundation, please be sure to submit these as soon as possible.

And speaking of Trees for Troops ... nominations are now open for the Christmas SPIRIT Awards, which recognize exceptional efforts in advancing the Christmas spirit for kids, families and the environment. Awards are available in five categories: Community, Industry, Military and the National Christmas SPIRIT Award. Nominations are due by April 15, 2012 – download a nomination form at the CSF website (www.christmasspiritfoundation.org) or call 636/449-5060.

Start making your summer vacation plans – and mark your calendars for Aug. 8-11 as we head to Sacramento, Calif., for the 2012 NCTA Convention & Trade Show. The California Christmas Tree Association is already hard at work developing farm tours and special events to educate and entertain attendees. As always, you can count on a great lineup of educational sessions, covering the latest marketing, production and business management topics, and time to network and shop from vendors in the Trade Show.

This year's Convention will be held at the Sacramento Convention Center, located adjacent to the Hyatt Regency Sacramento. You can reserve your room now by calling 888/421-1442 and asking for the NCTA group rate of \$112/night. Be sure to watch your email and the NCTA website for more information as it becomes available.

There is no checkoff program in place for 2012. Although announced as a final rule in November 2011 by USDA, it was quickly iced by an unlikely turn of events. The end result was that it was not in effect for the 2011 season, meaning there will be no assessments due on the

crop just sold and there will be no checkoff funds available to market Real Trees for the 2012 season.

Just two days after the final rule was published, USDA announced that the checkoff was stayed, as a result of consumer and media reaction after the program was incorrectly labeled a "tax on Christmas Trees by the Obama administration. While the checkoff is not an NCTA program, the association has been following the issue closely over the past few years and acted quickly to help stop the spread of misinformation, including issuing a statement and responding to media throughout the season. NCTA has also been in close communication with USDA and other commodity groups to get more information for the industry.

This will, of course, be a topic of discussion at CT Plus, and stay tuned for more information. In the meantime, the industry will continue to rely on voluntary funding to carry out NCTA's protection and promotion efforts. Please consider making a contribution to support these efforts. (Pledge forms are available at www.christmastree.org/pledgeform.pdf.)

In December, the Real Tree industry celebrated the first annual "National Christmas Tree Week," as declared by a resolution of the U.S. Senate. With some encouragement from NCTA, ANLA and others in the industry, the resolution was passed unanimously on Nov. 30 and recognizes the many benefits of Real Trees and their impact on the U.S. economy. This is a great talking point for the industry, as it can be celebrated each year during the first full week of December.

You are invited to become a member of NCTA. There is strength in numbers and as our industry shrinks, it is more important than ever that NCTA has a substantial membership base when it calls upon legislators and administrators to make positive changes for our industry. NCTA is holding dues rates at the 2011 level in recognition of the tough times that many of us are facing. You can get NCTA's new brochure and membership form at: <http://www.christmastree.org/mapplication.cfm> or call 636/449-5070.

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