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NCTA Announces Winners of 2005 "Help Santa Find the Perfect Real Christmas Tree" Contest

Chesterfield, MO -- The second annual "Help Santa Find the Perfect Real Christmas Tree" national contest sponsored by the National Christmas Tree Association (NCTA) produced winners in four different age categories.

To participate in the contest, children (ages 6-18) took a picture of their family with their fresh, Real Christmas Tree during the 2005 holiday season, wrote a story about why the tree was special or "perfect" to them, and sent it to NCTA. NCTA and its sponsors offered grand prizes that included \$5,000 scholarships and trips for four to Orlando, Fla. All of the winners selected \$5,000 scholarships as their prize.

NCTA launched this contest as part of a broader campaign to make sure that Christmas traditions and values remain strong in our country. The multi-year campaign hopes to reach Americans with the underlying message, "Nothing Says Christmas More Than a Real Tree."

The winner in Category IV (ages 16-18) is Katherine Hesterberg of Wasilla, Alaska. In her essay, titled "A Shining Hope," Katherine explained, "To me, my Real Christmas Tree is much, much more than just a tree," as she decorated her tree in honor of a family friend deployed to Iraq in hope of his safe return. Her entry was chosen among all others as worthy of the "Grand

(Contest Winners – Page 2)

Prize,” which adds an additional \$5,000 to the scholarship. Katherine says she will use the scholarship money to help achieve her dream of becoming a professional ballerina.

The winner in Category I (ages 6-9) is Colin Saint of Horton, Ala. In his essay, Colin describes his family’s final trip to Springfield’s Christmas Tree Farm, which will be closing. He also explained how his family recycles the tree after the holidays by putting it in a pond to provide a habitat for fish. “Our tree is making another home happy,” Colin wrote. Colin found out about the contest from his teacher, Ms. Raines at Douglas Elementary, who encouraged her students to enter.

The winner in Category II (ages 10-12) is Macy Koch of OshKosh, Wis. In her essay, Macy described her family’s annual hunt for the perfect tree at Harmony Hill Evergreens Choose & Cut farm. “My favorite part of getting a Real Christmas Tree is the time spent together as we pick out and decorate the perfect tree,” she said.

The winner in Category III (ages 13-15) is Brian Talley of Duncanville, Texas. Brian wrote about his special friendship with an elderly neighbor. “As I have gotten older, this is when I have truly understood the true meaning of Christmas,” Brian wrote. “It is not about the receiving of presents, it’s all about giving to those who don’t have.”

In addition to the four category winners, NCTA was able to recognize the runners-up with additional prizes, including a train set from Lionel, a 15-pound gift basket from Hershey’s, and a special gift package from country music star Michael Peterson. The runners-up in Category I were Nate

(Contest Winners – Page 3)

Steinmeyer of Hebron, Neb.; Clair Kennedy of Red Bay, Ala.; and Klea Perez of Chicago, Ill. Additional prize winners in Category II were James Snyder of Horseheads, N.Y.; Sage Hartlaub of Cumberland, Md.; and Roxanna Hedges of Huntsville, Utah. Tanner Schenewark of Hutto, Texas; Natalee Rolince of Attleboro, Mass.; and Megan D'Andrea of Micanopy, Fla., were recognized in Category III. The runners-up in Category IV were Marianne Sierocinski of Davie, Fla.; Clinton Smith of New Orleans, La.; and Ronan Baker of Salem, Ore.

NCTA is offering the contest for the 2006 holiday season. Visit www.realchristmastrees.org for complete contest information.