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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Crystal Springs Tree Farm Named NCTA's 2014 Grand Champion Christmas Tree Farmer Will Provide 2014 Official White House Christmas Tree**

July 30, 2014 (Chesterfield, MO) – A Douglas-fir Christmas Tree grown by Chris Botek, of Crystal Springs Tree Farm in Lehighton, PA, has been named Grand Champion of the National Christmas Tree Association's (NCTA) 2014 National Christmas Tree Contest. As growers of the Grand Champion tree, the Botek's have earned the right to present the official 2014 White House Christmas Tree this season. Since 1966, NCTA members have presented the official Christmas Tree for display in the White House Blue Room.

Dan Taylor, of Dan and Bryan Trees in Kearneysville, WV, was named Reserve Champion of the contest. Traditionally, the Reserve Champion farmers have provided a Christmas Tree for the residence of the Vice President.

Trees entered in the NCTA contest must fit into one of five species categories: True Fir, Douglas-fir, Spruce, Pine or Other. A panel of judges, made up of long-time growers and past contest winners, selected the first-, second- and third-place winners in each category, then attendees of the Midwest regional conference and a panel of consumer judges voted for their favorite among the species finalists. Those vote totals determined the Grand Champion and Reserve Champion trees, which were announced July 26 at the Michigan and Mid America Christmas Tree Summer Meeting being held in Allegan, MI.

"A fresh, farm-grown Christmas tree is a great tradition in our country, and we Christmas Tree farmers love this 38 year tradition," said Blake Rafeld, NCTA president and a Christmas Tree grower from Ashland, OH. "You have to be really good at your craft to win this contest and the Botek's have proven their mettle three times now."

To enter NCTA's national contest, growers must first win their state/regional competitions in the previous 12 months. While the Botek's are no strangers to being named Grand Champions of the NCTA contest, winning in both 2006 and 2010, they are looking forward to celebrating their farm's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in conjunction with the special honor of being Grand Champion.

Christmas trees have been in the Botek family for nearly 75 years when they began selling them at a small family run grocery store. In 1964, Chris' parents, Francis & Margaret bought about 25 acres of land in the beautiful Mahoning Valley in Pennsylvania. Today, Chris runs daily operations at Crystal Spring Tree Farm which now propagates about 15 varieties of evergreen trees on nearly 200 acres of land. "My approach is, if you're going to enter the national contest, you have to go all out and bring your farm's best tree," said Botek. "I even brought a backup tree in case something happened to my first choice. I've checked the growth on the tree I entered almost daily for a long time."

White House staff members typically travel to the Grand Champion's farm in October to select the tree that will serve as the centerpiece of the Blue Room holiday decorations. The Blue Room tree will need be about 18 ½ feet tall, much bigger than the 6- to 8-foot trees entered in the contest.

### **Species Category Finalists**

**Douglas-Fir:** Chris Botek, Crystal Springs Tree Farm, Lehighton, PA – Grand Champion

**True Fir:** Dan Taylor, Dan and Bryan Trees, Kearneysville, WV – Reserve Champion

**Spruce:** Dale Hudler, Hudler Tree Farm LLC, West Jefferson, NC

**Pine:** Joe Hensler, Hensler Nursery Inc., Hamlet, IN

### **Winners of the National Wreath contest, also held during the NCTA conference were:**

**Undecorated Category:** Dale Hudler, Hudler Tree Farm LLC, West Jefferson, NC

**Decorated Category:** Dale Hudler, Hudler Tree Farm LLC, West Jefferson, NC

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## **ABOUT NCTA**

### **About the National Christmas Tree Association (NCTA)**

The National Christmas Tree Association is the national trade association representing the farm-grown Christmas Tree industry. NCTA represents more than 600 active member farms, 29 state and regional associations, and 4,000 affiliated businesses that grow and sell Christmas Trees or provide related supplies and services. To learn more, visit [www.realchristmastrees.org](http://www.realchristmastrees.org) or call 636/449-5070.