

Sixteenth Annual City Hall Holiday Celebration And Tree Lighting Spectacular Filled With Song, Sparkle, And Surprises

Rain Couldn't Dampen Spirits at Dilworth Plaza Holiday Festivities

(December 5, 2009 – Philadelphia) Hundreds of Philadelphians gathered at Dilworth Plaza on a chilly, rain-soaked evening to join in the City of Philadelphia's official launch of the holiday season on Wednesday, December 2, 2009.

The centerpiece of the event, a 35 foot high, and 20 foot wide Blue Spruce was decorated with over 1,000 LED energy-efficient lights and nearly 300 ornaments. Topping it all off was a luminous, leaded glass four-point star contributed by the Hoffman Design Group. The 2009 Holiday tree was donated by Alice Simmons of Northeast Philadelphia in memory of her late mother and son and was placed at its final destination by Fairmount Park staff using a 230 foot, 80 ton crane, provided courtesy of the Sautter Crane Company.

The audience which included City Commissioners and City Councilmembers was entertained with musical performances by Miss Philadelphia, Ryann Richardson, The Performing Arts Troupe of the Philadelphia Department of Recreation, and the Bravo Brass ensemble of the Philadelphia Youth Orchestra.

City Representative, Melanie E. Johnson, the Holiday Celebration's official emcee, took this occasion to remind Philadelphians of the importance of the celebration's theme for 2009 - "Simple Gifts" - the giving of one's self through service to those in need. She encouraged Philadelphians to seek out those agencies and institutions that provide much needed help to people and families throughout the year and to consider giving the precious gift of volunteer time.

Thomas Hueller of German American Marketing, Inc. was welcomed to the stage to comment on the return of the Holiday Village in Philadelphia which debuted in 2008 to the delight of over 150,000 visitors. Once again, shoppers would be able to browse among more than 50 local and international vendors to purchase gifts, crafts and jewelry for holiday giving as well as enjoy a variety of food and beverages.

City Hall Tree Lighting Add 2

As the countdown to the holiday tree lighting drew closer, Mayor Michael Nutter stepped forward to greet the audience which included over 500 employees and administrators from the Philadelphia office of PriceWaterhousecoopers. This red-capped contingent had arrived on Dilworth Plaza after a march down North Broad Street to make their annual donation of toys for children at Suburban Square then over to City Hall for a surprise presentation to Mayor Michael Nutter.

Market Managing Partner of PriceWaterhousecoopers, Ed Lovelidge, was welcomed to the stage to make the presentation to Mayor Nutter on behalf of his firm and its employees. A check for \$100,000 earmarked for City-sponsored youth projects and education programs was presented to the Mayor. Mr. Lovelidge remarked that the PriceWaterhousecoopers employees had decided to forgo the firm's usual holiday festivities and instead make this contribution to the City. Mayor Nutter responded with his sincere gratitude for their generosity on behalf of the citizens and communities of Philadelphia who would benefit from this gift. .

Lisa Nutter then joined her husband, Mayor Nutter, to place a special recycled ornament on the holiday tree. The ornament was selected from a collection of decorations constructed entirely of recycled materials handmade by Philadelphia area students working under the direction of Keep Philadelphia Beautiful.

City Representative Melanie Johnson invited everyone to join in the tree-lighting countdown. At the final moment of the countdown Mayor Nutter threw the switch and Dilworth Plaza was filled with a light that bounced off the raindrops and lit the faces of the children and adults in the audience as the Bravo Brass struck up the notes of "Sleigh Ride." The holiday season in Philadelphia was officially ushered in.

But the evening was far from over. Mayor Nutter invited the audience and special guests to join him for a second tree lighting to follow at Love Park. Sponsored by Clear Wireless Service and coordinated by the Fairmount Park Commission, the Love Park tree-lighting cast the glow of thousands of LED lights across JFK Plaza to bring the dual festivities to a sparkling close.