



## **News for Immediate Release**

**Dec. 6, 2011**

### **Governor and Mrs. Corbett Light Capitol Christmas Tree, Honor Heroes**

**Harrisburg** – Governor Tom Corbett, along with his wife, Susan, and 14-year-old Colin Vengen, lit the Capitol Christmas tree today during a ceremony in the Rotunda honoring Pennsylvania’s heroes who helped residents survive this year’s storms and floods.

In September, Vengen, of Pottsville, Schuylkill County, was flown in a State Police helicopter to Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia to receive a liver transplant after flooding from Tropical Storm Lee made travel by vehicle impossible.

The theme of this year’s tree-lighting, “Hope for the Holidays,” recognizes the heroic efforts of the state police, along with members of the Pennsylvania National Guard and other first responders across the state.

“You made this Christmas and many more possible for our citizens,” Corbett said in gratitude to first responders in the Rotunda. “You proved in deeds and with willing hearts that we’re all in this together.”

Joining the Corbetts were Lt. Gov. Jim Cawley and his family, representatives of the State Police and Commissioner Frank Noonan, members of the Pennsylvania National Guard and Major General Wesley E. Craig, and officials from the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, including Director Glenn Cannon.

Department of General Services Secretary Sheri Phillips, members of the Hershey High School Music Department, the Rev. Donald Steele, Gerritt Strathmeyer of the Pennsylvania Christmas Tree Growers Association, and Rep. Seth Grove, (R-York) also participated in today’s ceremony.

This year’s Capitol Christmas tree is a 22-foot Concolor donated (along with 28 other trees throughout the Capitol complex) by Strathmeyer Forests in Dover, York County. It is decorated with 800 white LED lights and more than 300 hand-made ornaments donated by members of Pennsylvania senior centers.

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**Editor’s Note:** Additional background related to those honored today follows:

**Pennsylvania State Police:** Cpl. Donald M. Hughes and Cpl. Paul B. Roy, Troop F, Montoursville, flew Colin Vengen and his parents to Children's Hospital of Philadelphia on Sept. 8 for a liver transplant after flooding blocked all major roadways around their Schuylkill County home. The hospital only had a short window of time in which to perform the transplant, which doctors said was successful.

Cpl. Christopher Royles, also Troop F, rescued Jessica Harding and her 5-year-old son, Joshua, from their home in Lycoming County on Sept. 8, which was surrounded by flood waters. Joshua was ill and in need of medication. Royles landed the helicopter in their front yard and flew them to safety.

Cpl. Brad J. Eisenhower, Troop F, tied a rope around his waist to wade through the floodwaters to help a woman and two small children stranded on the roof of their home in Lycoming County on Sept. 7. Eisenhower was swept into the water, but was pulled to safety by his partner, Cpl. Larue Stelene and a volunteer. Eisenhower then joined the crew of a hovercraft, reaching the woman, Andrea Giacobbi, 31, and her children, Salvatore, 3, and Olivia, 7, and helping them to safety.

**PA National Guard:** Attending today's ceremony were 34 of the 1,400 Guard members who rescued residents by air and by ground, assisted local law enforcement and other emergency responders, and worked in recovery efforts, helping to distribute needed supplies.

**PEMA:** Coordinated the statewide efforts to get help to those residents impacted by the storms, as well as establish shelters, provide temporary housing and other assistance.

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