2nd Annual Festival of Trees in Hagerstown, MD Events and Entertainment
Special Care Level II Nursery Fundraiser

Thousands of people will attend the Antietam Healthcare Foundation’s 2nd Annual Festival of Trees in Hagerstown. The event is scheduled for December 1st through December 4th, with a preview party set for the evening of November 30th. More than 40 beautifully decorated trees will be on display at the Robinwood Medical Center, and several special events and performing groups are scheduled. The fundraiser helps raise money for the special care level II nursery project at the Washington County Hospital. The nursery is for infants born several weeks prematurely, who normally cannot be cared for locally in Hagerstown, MD.

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The Festival of Trees in Hagerstown is a significant annual fundraiser, and according to steering committee member Robin Lyles, "This is an exciting project. To have more than two hundred volunteers and sponsors committed to this community-wide holiday celebration is wonderful. However, to have it all be a benefit for the littlest and most needy infants in our community, makes it incredibly worthwhile."

The holiday festival schedule has been announced, beginning on November 30th by invitation only and continuing daily through December 4th for the public. Several bands and groups from Washington County's Public Schools and the community are scheduled to perform. "Hundreds of entertainers will perform including school choirs, dance groups, and ensembles. The Maryland State Boychoir, and bluegrass bands Wing & A Prayer and Dead Men’s Hollow will also be performing," said steering committee member Katie Groh Fitzsimmons. "This is holiday entertainment, topped off with talented local student bands and singing groups."

Last year, more than eight thousand dollars was granted from the Festival to the special care nursery project. According to Antietam Healthcare Foundation Executive Director Sandy Pollack, "With the participation from so many sponsors, we will be greatly increasing the donation for the nursery this year. After all the costs are taken care of from the events, entertainment, displays, and activities, we are confident that the nursery project will receive a tremendous boost from the Festival of Trees." Pollack anticipates thousands of people attending the planned events this year.

The Antietam Healthcare Foundation’s Festival of Trees has several committees involved in planning the event - including sponsorship, marketing, public relations, volunteers, gift shop, entertainment, and more. Many business and organizations have committed to sponsor the festival, including Susquehanna Bank and Susquehanna Bancshares, Comprehensive Women’s Care, Freeman & Freeman, Home Care Pharmacy, the Herald-Mail Company, and the Hagerstown-Washington County Convention and Visitors Bureau, along with scores of other sponsors and partners.
Susquehanna Bank Chairman, President, and CEO James Pierne said that the Festival of Trees is an important community project. "This annual event is a chance for us to be a big star for little ones who need special care. It's all kinds of lights, decorations, and fun - and all to benefit the special care level II nursery. We are extremely proud to sponsor this event, and we invite everyone in the community to join in the fun."

There are bands, dancing groups, and school groups scheduled to perform each day during the festival. The schedule of events include: Wednesday November 30th is the "Tis the Night Before" preview party (the judging of the decorated trees will be announced). Thursday December 1st is the "Deck the House Decorator Day" and people can learn helpful home holiday decorating tips. Friday December 2nd includes the "Senior Social" and in the evening is the special holiday concert from the Maryland State Boychoir. On Saturday December 3rd, children can enjoy the whimsical "Breakfast with Santa". Later that evening little girls can dance the night away with the special man in their lives at the "Sugarplum Dance." And on Sunday December 4th, children may attend the "Teddy Bear Clinic" and enjoy fun activities designed to inspire kids’ interest in a healthy lifestyle. All events take place at Robinwood Medical Center.

“While the Festival of Trees is a terrific showcase of the holiday season, our business community never forgets the underlying importance of this fundraising effort,” said Tom Riford, president and CEO of the Hagerstown-Washington County Convention and Visitors Bureau. "There is no greater activity than caring for human life, and to have a special care level II nursery here in Washington County is of critical importance.”

The expanded special care level II nursery will provide specialized care for babies born early or newborns with medical complications requiring constant observation or medical care. The nursery will also be able to provide care for babies born prematurely, as early as 32 weeks gestation. Babies born prematurely often suffer from breathing problems, have difficulty eating or may be at increased risk for infection. The nursery will have four to six beds available for these babies. The special care nursery will care for full term babies with infections as well.

Specialized technology, including incubators called isolettes along with cardiac monitors, will be utilized to meet the newborns’ needs. A team of highly skilled physicians, nurses, and other health professionals is already trained in neonatal care.

One great benefit of the special care level II nursery is that it will keep families together during a difficult time. Previously, premature newborns would have to be sent out of the county, frequently to Baltimore, to receive needed care. Transfers can often be traumatic for the newborn as well as for the family. Often, the mother and baby would have to be separated during the process. Now, these precious babies will not have to be out of our community.

For more information about the Foundation’s Festival of Trees, see: www.festivaloftreesinhagerstown.org.

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