



## NEWS RELEASE

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### State Capitol Holiday Tree Honors Fallen Soldiers, Their Families

**DENVER – December 7, 2016** – This year’s State Capitol holiday tree, themed the "Gold Star Tree of Honor," again pays tribute to the more than 350 Colorado military service members lost in the global war on terror since Sept. 11, 2001, as well as their families.

This evening, Gov. John Hickenlooper will host a private reception for Gold Star Families – the survivors of service members who have lost their lives in conflict or in support of certain military operations – alongside the tree at the State Capitol. At 4 p.m. this Friday, Lt. Gov. Donna Lynne will publicly dedicate the tree at a formal lighting ceremony in the Capitol’s North Foyer.

“This year marks the 15th anniversary of our nation at war,” said Janelle Darnell, chief of protocol for the Office of The Adjutant General, Colorado Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. “It is very important to families that have made such great sacrifices to know the State has not forgotten them, and will not forget them.”

The Capitol’s holiday tree was provided for the sixth year in a row by the Colorado State Forest Service Fort Collins District. The approximately 50-year-old, 25-foot subalpine fir was harvested on State Trust Land in northern Larimer County.

Colorado National Guard soldiers and their families decorated the tree, and boughs trimmed off of it were used by the DMVA to craft wreaths for the Gold Star Family reception today and to commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor that led to the United States entering into World War II.

Each year, CSFS foresters selectively cut the State Capitol holiday tree and smaller trees destined for the Colorado State University campus as part of ongoing management efforts to improve forest health.

“We are so proud to be allowed the opportunity to provide this holiday tree that honors the sacrifice of both our fallen heroes and their families,” said Mike Lester, state forester and director of the CSFS, who is himself from a Gold Star Family.

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*The Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) provides technical forestry assistance, wildfire mitigation expertise and outreach and education to help landowners and communities achieve their forest management goals. The CSFS is a service and outreach agency of the Warner College of Natural Resources at Colorado State University and provides staffing for the Division of Forestry within the Colorado Department of Natural Resources.*