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FLORIDA ARBOR DAY EVENT UNVEILS NEW TREESARECOOL SPECIALTY LICENSE PLATE; OFFICIAL TREE PLANTED

SAFETY HARBOR, FL – January 18, 2008 --- In celebration of Florida Arbor Day, the City of Safety Harbor hosted today at 4 pm the official Arbor Day tree planting and unveiling of the new Florida specialty license plate, “TreesAreCool.”

“It’s a great honor that the Florida Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) selected our city as the site for the tree planting and TreesAreCool plate unveiling,” said Safety Harbor Mayor Andy Steingold in ceremonies held in the town’s gazebo area of John Wilson Park, Main Street. “Safety Harbor is very proud of its beautiful setting and 2008 marks the 21st year as a Tree City, U.S.A.”

In the picturesque park, the official tree, an eight-foot Southern Red Cedar (*juniperus silicicola*) was planted by Steingold and fellow city commissioners along with Rep. Bill Heller, Florida State Representative, District 52, Pinellas County; Don Winsett, board member of the ISA and chair of the TreesAreCool committee; and Norm Easey, ISA Florida executive director. Governor Charlie Crist sent his best wishes for the planting, but schedule conflicts at the last minute kept him from participating.

The tree, generously donated by Skinner Nurseries, the leading supplier of green goods for landscape construction in the South, will become Safety Harbor’s legacy Holiday Christmas Tree to be lighted annually. Additionally, a commemorative plaque is being placed at the base of the tree in celebration of this historical event.

As part of the festivities, ISA’s Don Winsett and Rep. Heller unveiled for the first time to the public the recently Florida Cabinet-approved new specialty license plate, TreesAreCool, which will be ready for Florida motorists’ purchase statewide at the end of this month. This is one of a very few signature plates that are being released in the market this year. The Florida ISA Chapter has been working on the TreesAreCool plate for more than a year and a half.

TreesAreCool license plate revenues will benefit the Florida urban environment through tree research, the on-going education of tree-care professionals and provide public education programs about tree selection, care and preservation. This is extremely important due to the recent losses of trees in the state because of severe damage caused by hurricanes and fires. The TreesAreCool program is administered by the Florida Chapter of ISA, a Florida non-profit organization. For more information, visit *TreesAreCool.com*.

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“The TreesAreCool program is vital to Florida where a single urban tree returns over \$90,000 in direct benefits during the lifetime of the tree to the residents and visitors to the Sunshine State,” Winsett stated during the ceremonies.

“Some of these direct benefits include increased real estate value, reduction of pollutants and energy savings. Research shows that trees in a community attract businesses and tourists, people linger and shop longer on tree-lined streets and businesses leasing offices in developments with trees find their workers are more productive and absenteeism is reduced,” Winsett added.

In keeping with this commitment, hundreds of trees were given away to event attendees for their own plantings. The trees were donated by Florida ISA-affiliated companies Outside Interests, Aventura Nurseries, Arazoza Brothers Corporation and Skinner Nurseries.

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