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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Farming Capital of California Celebrates 100th Downtown Christmas Tree with 3-Day Winter Wonderland Event

CORCORAN, CA (November 26, 2019) – The City of Corcoran, affectionately known as the Farming Capital of California, is celebrating its 100th downtown Christmas tree and the Corcoran Chamber of Commerce has planned a 3-day winter wonderland event in honor of this heartwarming tradition.

Each year the tree brings a tremendous amount of joy to Corcoran residents, but mostly to the children. The first Thursday of every December, the Corcoran Chamber plans an annual Christmas parade just prior to the downtown tree lighting. As the community gathers around the tree, those in attendance can feel the crowd's emotion as the tree is lit. Afterwards the children eagerly gather to meet Santa Claus, take a photo and receive their candy bag.

This year, for an entire weekend following the lighting, the area surrounding the tree will be transformed into a "winter wonderland" complete with an ice skating rink, snow sledding hill, live reindeer, story time with Mrs. Claus, chestnut roasting, cookie decorating, children's craft stations, live nativity scene, an exclusive children only store, visits with Santa Claus, vintage photo ops, evening horse and carriage rides, face painting, specialty vendors, children's snow play area, visits with Mickey and Minnie Mouse, breakfast with Santa on Saturday morning and so much more.

Lisa Shaw, Executive Director of the Corcoran Chamber of Commerce says, *"100 years ago our town Christmas tree was a gift to the children. Every year neighbors gather for the lighting of the tree and you can literally hear a gasp from the crowd. The Christmas Tree Committee promises a spectacular tree once again. These events have*

been made possible by donations from local business owners, volunteer organizations and community members wanting to continue giving to local families."

The Corcoran Christmas parade will start Thursday, December 5th at 6 p.m. and the tree lighting ceremony will immediately follow. On Friday, December 6th all activities will be open from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday, December 7th the Corcoran Kiwanis Club will host breakfast with Santa from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. and all activities will be open from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday, December 8th will close out the weekend with all activities open from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Ice skating and snow sledding will cost \$1 each and the pancake breakfast will cost \$2. All other events will be free, and the entire valley is welcome to attend.

The History of the Tree

In 1905 Corcoran, CA was comprised of a blacksmith shop, a small store and a few scattered homes. Mr. Hobart Johnstone Whitley, a developer who had established many cities in the state, visited and saw great promise in the natural resources of the area. He quickly purchased 32,000 acres of land and began to lay out a community. Over the next 15 years, people moved to Corcoran from Georgia, Arkansas, Oklahoma and Mexico and agriculture became, and still is, its leading industry.

By 1920 Corcoran had a solid population and its residents decided that the hardworking people of the town deserved a Christmas tree. They gathered local support and erected a tree in the intersection of Whitley and Chittenden Avenues. In addition, they vowed that every child would receive a present from Santa. Santa's gift was a bag with hard candy and an orange, all donated by local businesses and growers.

The group, comprised of Corcoran Volunteer Firemen, employees of the San Joaquin Power & Light Company, Veterans of Foreign Wars and a team of volunteers, went to the mountains to find a suitable tree. There were no chain saws. Trees were cut with cross-cut saws requiring a person pushing and pulling on each end to provide the power. Once cut, the tree was lowered gently and carried to a trailer. Eventually chain saws and hoist equipment became available and the manual efforts became some-what less arduous. The advent of better equipment also allowed the group to obtain larger trees.

In the early 1990's the management and planning of the downtown tree was transferred from the VFW to an association simply named the Corcoran Christmas Tree Committee. Membership in this group was open to all citizens and several VFW members continued with the newly formed committee.

Tree treks are now one-day events and are open to entire families to attend. The group sponsors a hotdog and hamburger barbeque for those who participate in the journey up the mountain and the project continues to be funded by community participation.

Today the tree is about 65 feet tall and weighs roughly 7,000 pounds. It is 80-feet from the bottom of the tree stand to the top of the flag. The Corcoran Christmas tree is decorated with over 2,000 LED lights in nets hand-made by committee members. The tree is topped by the American flag in honor of our veterans and our country.

The Christmas Tree Committee continues to provide a candy bag to any child that comes to see Santa. Proudly, the small town of Corcoran holds the record for having a lit Christmas tree, each year, in the same location.