



June 17, 2009

Press Inquiries:

Kate Davis

800-294-3840

kate@themeridiangroup.com

All other inquiries:

Mary DiCarlo

630-369-8300

marydicarlo@treefund.org

Local Green Enthusiast's 12th Ride in America's Largest Fundraiser for Trees

Aurora plant pathologist to cycle across the Northeast in the STIHL Tour des Trees

(AURORA, Colo.) – Steve Geist, a local plant pathologist with Swingle Lawn Tree and Landscape care, will devote a week of his summer to ride in the STIHL Tour des Trees, a weeklong, 500-mile, cross-country cycling event. The Tour, considered America's largest fundraiser for tree research, benefits the Tree Research and Education Endowment (TREE) Fund, an international charitable organization dedicated to advancing knowledge in the field of arboriculture and urban forestry to benefit people, trees and the environment.

"My Tour des Trees journey began in 1998 and this will be my 12th consecutive tour. I have cycled some 40,000 miles, raised \$75,000, covered a lot of country and met many passionate people. My work has just begun," said Geist.

The 2009 STIHL Tour des Trees begins when riders from across the world gather in New Jersey on July 18. The Tour officially rolls out from New York City on July 19 and winds through eight states in the Northeast, including a challenge route into Maine, before culminating in a grand finale ceremony at the Temple in Roger Williams Park, Providence, RI on July 25. Recent Tours have cycled through the Midwest and Northern California.

"The commitment by participating riders like Geist is inspiring. They love trees and are passionate about helping to raise money for tree research and arboriculture education," said Janet Bornancin, executive director of the TREE Fund. "Their passion sustains our mission, and the funds they raise are essential to moving the arboriculture industry forward and preserving our urban forests."

To participate in the weeklong Tour, riders must raise a minimum of \$3,500, which helps to fund scientific research grants and educational scholarships administered by the TREE Fund. Corporate sponsorships offset the cost of food, housing and logistics along the Tour route, and 2009 sponsors of the event include title sponsor STIHL Inc., crown sponsor National Grid, partners Asplundh Tree Expert Co., Duke Energy, Bartlett Tree Experts and Northeast STIHL, and platinum sponsor Davey Tree.



“It is my way of giving back to the tree care industry that has taken care of me these past 26 years,” said Geist, who has so far raised \$2,000 of his \$5,000 goal. To help Geist reach his goal and learn more about the other riders on the Tour, visit the Rider Gallery at sthiltourdestrees.org.

The 2008 Tour des Trees raised more than a quarter million dollars for the TREE Fund. Since its inception in 1992, the Tour has generated more than \$4.1 million and has funded a host of diverse projects, including post-Katrina research on the impact of hurricane flooding on mature trees, research into best practices to improve the viability of urban street trees and development of improved safety techniques for tree care professionals. A list of recent grant recipients and their projects is available at www.treefund.org.

More information on the STIHL Tour des Trees, the 2009 riders, and opportunities for supporting the Tour can be found at www.stihltourdestrees.org.

About STIHL Inc.

STIHL Inc. manufactures the world’s largest selling brand of chain saws and produces a full line of powerful, lightweight, and versatile handheld outdoor power equipment for homeowners and professional users. STIHL products are sold through servicing power equipment retailers from coast to coast— not mass merchants. STIHL products sold through U.S. STIHL dealers are for distribution in the United States only. For more information or for the name of the closest STIHL retailer, call toll free 1-800-GO STIHL (1-800-467-8445) or visit the STIHL Web site at www.stihlusa.com.

STIHL is also pleased to support the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA), the Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA), National FFA, Professional Landcare Network (PLANET), the American Tree Farm System (ATFS), and the National Association of State Park Directors (NASPD).

About the TREE Fund:

The TREE Fund’s mission is to identify and fund projects and programs that advance knowledge in the field of arboriculture and urban forestry to benefit people, trees, and the environment.

The TREE Fund has supported research that has led to important developments in:

- Understanding air pollution reduction and carbon sequestration by trees
- Quantifying the costs and benefits of urban trees
- Improving conditions for tree growth in difficult sites
- Strategies to manage diseases and pests that afflict urban trees

For more information, visit www.treefund.org.

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