

# Trees spread holiday cheer to soldiers

MERRILLAN

Wisconsin Christmas tree growers are doing their part to bring the holiday spirit to troops serving far from home this holiday season.

Northern Christmas Trees & Nursery of Merrillan this week donated 100 Christmas trees to the campaign, which will distribute trees to several military bases in the U.S. and overseas in Iraq, as well as to families of active soldiers. The trees from Northern are slated to be shipped to soldiers and military families stationed at Fort Campbell, Ky.

"The kindness demonstrated by our nation's Christmas tree growers illustrates the spirit of holiday generosity, by bringing cheer to the men and women serving our country at a time when it's especially difficult to be distant from family and home," said state Sen. Ron Brown, R-Eau Claire, chairman of the Senate Veterans and Military Affairs Committee. He praised Northern Christmas Trees & Nursery owners Cal and Arlene Frelk and John and Ginger Ahl for their patriotism and generosity of spirit.

Trees for Troops is a nationwide initiative made possible by The Christmas SPIRIT Foundation, a nonprofit public charity. In cooperation with the FedEx Corporation and agricultural equipment manufacturer New Holland, the Christmas



**CHEERING SOLDIERS** – Trees cut on a Merrillan farm will help cheer soldiers who are unable to get home for the holidays.

(Contributed photo)

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TREES, cont. from page 1

SPIRIT Foundation coordinates delivery of fresh Christmas trees from farms across the nation to soldiers and families.

"The Trees for Troops program provides a way for all Americans to show their appreciation for the sacrifices our troops and their families are making," said Brown. Brown noted that Wisconsin tree farms are donating roughly 400 Christmas trees to this honorable effort. The Christmas SPIRIT Foundation anticipates the Trees for Troops program will provide more than 3,500 Christmas trees to troops and their families this season.

Members of the National Christmas Tree Association and growers across the country are donating the Christmas trees, while FedEx is providing free shipping, and New Holland is providing logistical support. Anyone wishing to support the effort can visit [www.Christmasspiritfoundation.org](http://www.Christmasspiritfoundation.org) to leave a message for the troops or make a contribution to the program.

Northern Christmas Trees & Nursery has grown trees in western Wisconsin for over 50 years, and was recently featured in a documentary exploring the history and traditions surrounding the Christmas tree. "O Christmas Tree" is scheduled to air for the first time at 3:15 p.m. Dec. 25, Christmas Day, on local PBS stations.

"It's fitting that this locally owned, family-run business be highlighted as a reflection of what the Christmas holiday truly represents," said Brown. "The giving spirit of Wisconsin's Christmas tree farmers reflects our appreciation for the sacrifices of the brave men and women who fight to protect our freedoms and liberties, and their families."