



BLOSSOMS of HOPE...
the Howard County Cherry Tree Project
NEWS RELEASE



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New Event to Celebrate Howard County's Cherry Blossoms
Hope Lights Up the Night at
Comcast CHERRYBRATION 2007

HOWARD COUNTY, MD— On Saturday April 28th hope will light up the night as Howard County's Office of Tourism proudly premieres "**Comcast CHERRYBRATION**" a community celebration of **Blossoms of Hope... the Howard County Cherry Tree Project**. The outdoor festival, which will take place between 4pm and dusk at Centennial Park in Ellicott City will feature music, children's art activities and a variety of displays focusing on wellness, the outdoors and the importance of nature.

At dusk, festival goers can participate in the magic of the festival's "LANTERNS OF HOPE" luminary procession featuring handmade tissue paper lantern sculptures. Lanterns for the parade can be made at an artist workshop that will be held at 9am in Pavilion H at Centennial Park. The workshop is limited to 100 people and participants must call 410-313-1900 to register. Children and staff from Howard County's Recreational Licensed Childcare program are also busy building lanterns at 42 centers across Howard County to be carried in the parade. Everyone is encouraged to create and bring their own lantern sculpture to be part of the procession.

Sponsored by Comcast and presented in cooperation with the Howard County Office of Tourism and the Department of Recreation & Parks, CHERRYBRATION is designed to coincide with the blossoming of 1,000 beautiful "Blossoms of Hope " cherry trees that have been planted to beautify the county and help raise cancer awareness.

Title-sponsor Comcast, one of the original "Founders" of Blossom of Hope, wanted to be part of taking this project to the next level. "As a leading communications and technology company, it's important for us to connect people to what's important in their lives," said Candace Humphrey, Area Director of Government and Public Affairs for Comcast's Greater

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Hope Lights Up the Night at Comcast CHERRYBRATION 2007 (continued)

Baltimore system, which includes Howard County. "We're very excited to be the major sponsor of this inaugural celebration of community, family, and the renewal of life."

Free red bud seedlings, a native plant sale, tissue paper blossoms, origami swans and messages of hope will be featured as part of the spring celebration. The Howard County Center for the Arts will give children an opportunity to help create an original canvas to be hung at the Claudia Mayer Cancer Research Center at Howard County General Hospital and local artist Teri Rizzutti will help budding artists explore ways to express their talents. REI Outdoors of College Park will be on-site with a family camping display, Odwalla products will offer free samples and Edy's Grand Ice Cream will provide special "cherry" treats for kids of all ages. A variety of hybrid cars will also be on display.

Visitors to the festival will be welcomed by six, 15 foot, hot pink, balloon blossoms fresh from their appearance in the National Parade of the Cherry Blossoms Festival, courtesy of Turf Valley Resort and Conference Center.

"The Blossoms of Hope cherry trees provide the perfect backdrop for an event that celebrates nature, art, hope and health," said Victoria Goodman, Executive Director of Blossoms of Hope, who is in charge of developing the new event for the Office of Tourism. "Our goal is to encourage families and friends to come together in a beautiful setting to simply reconnect, relax and rejoice in the renewal of spring. We want people to take a little time to 'check the tech at the door so to speak' and get outside to reflect on the significance this time of year has for everyone on both a personal and global level."

Beautiful Centennial Park is home to 40 of Blossoms of Hope's Kwanzan cherry trees. Included there are the original 20 trees located along the Route 108 border in "Founders Grove." Established in 2003, the grove features the original sponsors of the Blossoms of Hope initiatives, which include both Howard County Executive Ken Ulman and his predecessor Senator James Robey.

According to Rachelina Bonacci, Executive Director for the Office of Tourism, the concept of a new Howard County event which would focus on the blossoming season was part of the 5 year plan for the cherry tree project. "In our original plan we foresaw a signature event, tied to the cherry blossoms and we estimated it would take us 5 years to get there," Bonacci said. "We've arrive at this point 2 years early thanks to the enthusiasm the community has for this project."

Blossoms of Hope exceeded its scheduled timeline last fall when Camberley Homes announced that it would become the first official Blossoms of Hope community. Camberley's commitment to plant over 250 trees in its new Riverwood development off of Homewood Road in Ellicott City put plans for the new signature event on the fast track.

"This year's festival has come together in less than 3 months," Goodman said. "We are keeping it simple in scale and purpose, with our sites set on letting the community help us build it better each year. Despite its simplicity, I am confident that those who attend will find it a great way to spend a Saturday afternoon. Sometimes the simplest things are the most rewarding. We just need to allow ourselves the time to embrace that concept."