

*Contact Information:*

Jessica Didow  
610.655.6304  
media@readingpa.org



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Rededication of Fifth and Penn tree, seasonal festivities set for Saturday**

Reading, PA – December 15, 2014 - A decorating party and rededication of the now nationally and internationally renowned Fifth and Penn tree is set for this Saturday, Dec. 20.

The tree, the center of both controversy and inspiration, will receive an entire makeover just in time for Christmas week in effort led by the Reading Royals and owner Jack Gulati. Beyond the decorations, there will be seasonal music and live performances.

Mayor Vaughn D. Spencer and City Council President Francis G. Acosta invite the public to the festivities which get under way at 4 p.m. The official rededication of the tree is set for 5:30 p.m. when the switch is flipped and the lights illuminate Penn Square.

Winners of the Dear Tree Letter and Photography Contest hosted by Reading Eagle Company will be invited to read their winning entries and show their winning photo.

Folks will be able to place their decorations on the tree, beginning at 4 p.m. There will be hot chocolate and cookies available. People may bring their own ornaments, or make a donation or pledge of service to hang a special service ornament. Or do both!

“Let’s remember our neighbors who are struggling here at home – those who’ve lost a job or a home; a friend or a loved one – on Saturday. It’s often in the simple act of giving that we find the greatest happiness,” said Spencer.

The city will be collecting donations for the Reading Recreation Commission and the Berks County Coalition to End Homelessness. Both organizations are in need of personal-care items (shampoo, conditioner, toothpaste, toothbrushes, body wash) and gloves, mittens and hats. The Reading Recreation Commission is also in need of school supplies and school uniforms (new or gently-used pants and polo shirts). The Berks Coalition to End Homelessness is asking for new pillows and new blankets and non-perishable goods as well.

The Chanukah Menorah will be lit at 5:15 p.m. at the northwest corner of 5th and Penn Streets and at 5:30 p.m., local officials and musicians will lead a short ceremony dedicating the City of Reading’s Holiday Tree to the people.

“In this season of hope, let us come together as one people to ensure that we are doing everything we can to make the City of Reading the land of boundless optimism that this tree has come to represent for us,” said Acosta.

Following the Penn Square events, the City of Reading is sponsoring free public showings of the *Charlie Brown Christmas* movie at the R/C Reading Movies 11 and Imax Theatre at 7, 8, and 9 p.m.

The City of Reading wants to wish all of America a happy holiday season.

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