

Local Red Cross chapter to benefit from Great Swamp poinsettia sale in Long Hill

Posted: Friday, November 26, 2010 11:51 am

LONG HILL TWP. – The Great Swamp Greenhouses has agreed to help raise money for the Colonial Crossroads Chapter of the American Red Cross this holiday season through the sale of poinsettias.

When Great Swamp Greenhouse customers present a Red Cross holiday voucher at the time of purchase, the chapter will receive 10 percent of the proceeds.

Proceeds will benefit the chapter's mission services. Donations received from this program will help support the Colonial Crossroads Chapter's programs and services.

This past year the local chapter supported area fires, regional flooding, and international response to Haiti.

The holiday vouchers can be printed directly from the chapter's Web site at www.ccnjredcross.org.

The Colonial Crossroads Chapter provides Red Cross services for Long Hill Township, as well as Berkeley Heights, Chatham Borough, Chatham Township, East Hanover, Florham Park, Madison, New Providence, Springfield and Summit

Beneduce Family

The Beneduce family has been active in Long Hill Township, at Watchung Hills Regional High School, and at St. Vincent DePaul School for years.

Every holiday season, a group of high school and college students, from Long Hill and the surrounding area, work the holiday rush. Some kids have been coming back to do that for years.

Great Swamp Greenhouses owner Michael Beneduce is a third generation grower who learned the business at his grandfather's farm stand, "Amato's" on Shunpike Road in Madison.

Beneduce went through Madison's public school system with Julie Siciliano who is the manager at the Greenhouses, and also a board member of the local Red Cross and a member of the Disaster Action Team.

"Julie and I have been working together for 30 years and we are very happy to support her efforts on behalf of the Colonial Crossroads Chapter," said Beneduce. "I hope the customers who come to us every holiday for their poinsettias will take a moment to print these holiday vouchers to help this cause."

Beneduce graduated from Madison High School in 1975 and started the Great Swamp Greenhouses when he was 21 year old.

The garden center is located in the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge in Meyersville. Families every year make it a point to visit the poinsettias greenhouse, just to get in the spirit of the season by standing literally in a sea of the lush poinsettia plants.

There are a multitude of poinsettia colors offered.

"The variety of poinsettias has grown dramatically over the years to appeal to all tastes," says Casey Beneduce, Michael's wife. "We start growing the poinsettias around the first of August and they have fully matured by about the third week in November. From mid-September

until mid-October, the poinsettias need a full 12 hours of light and 12 hours of dark, which occurs naturally. When we come into the greenhouse in the evening, we bring a flashlight to keep the entire area in darkness.”

There are an array of colors, including “jingle bells” poinsettias which have a red and white leaf; “marble” poinsettias with a yellow and pinkish leaf; “freedom” poinsettias which are the traditional red color and then various shades of burgundy, pink and combinations.

A Holiday favorite is the hanging basket which can be used as a centerpiece on tables surrounded by an array of pine cones and fresh greens.

Poinsettias are available for purchase right now but are still in the growing stage. With plenty of light, daily watering and limited exposure to the cold, they can be enjoyed in the home as they mature.

To obtain holiday vouchers prior to a poinsettia purchase check the Red Cross Web site at www.ccnjredcross.org, or call Elissa Cordrey at (908)-273-2076 to have vouchers mailed directly to your home.

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