

St. James–St. John School in New Bedford selected to represent Massachusetts in creating ornaments for National Christmas Tree celebration in Washington, D.C.

56 trees surround the National Christmas Tree in President's Park each year. The trees are decorated with ornaments created by students in each state, territory and the District of Columbia.

At 56 schools across the country, students are creating one-of-a-kind ornaments for the 2019 National Christmas Tree display on the Ellipse in President's Park. These handcrafted ornaments will adorn 56 smaller trees that surround the National Christmas Tree. The 56 trees represent each U.S. state, territory and the District of Columbia as part of the America Celebrates display.

"I never would have imagined I could actually create an ornament for the National Christmas Tree display that represents my entire state!" Kayden Moore, a seventh-grade student at Harlem Middle School in Loves Park, Illinois said. "It is an honor that students from our small city were chosen for this once in a lifetime event!"

From state flowers to notable landmarks, students across the country are creating ornaments that celebrate their state, district or territory. Learn about last year's student artists and ornaments.

“Everyone has a home but not everyone has the honor of representing their home in Washington, D.C.,” Danica Lambert, a seventh grader at St. James–St. John School in New Bedford, Massachusetts said. “My heart is filled with love and joy to be able to represent my home of Massachusetts.”

Through a partnership with the National Park Service, the U.S. Department of Education worked with state art and education agencies to identify elementary, middle and high schools whose students would create the ornaments for the America Celebrates display. Over 1,500 students will participate in this year’s project. The project is funded by the National Park Foundation.

“I am happy that other people get to see our work!” Brian Hunter, a sixth-grade student at Marvin M. Sedway Middle School in North Las Vegas, Nevada, said. “I want to show everyone that we can do it!”

The America Celebrates display is one of the highlights of the National Christmas Tree experience, which will begin on Thursday, Dec. 5 with the 97th Annual National Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony.

The National Christmas Tree Lighting has strong ties to education. In 1923, a letter arrived at the White House from the District of Columbia Public Schools proposing that a decorated Christmas tree be placed on the South Lawn of the White House. On Christmas Eve that year, President Calvin Coolidge walked from the Oval Office to the Ellipse and pushed a button that lit the first National Christmas Tree. It was a 48-foot fir donated by Middlebury College in Vermont.

Since 1973, the National Christmas Tree has been a living tree which can be viewed year-round in President’s Park – one of America’s 419 national parks! The National Park Service recently planted a new Colorado blue spruce to serve as the National Christmas Tree.

The National Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony will kick off the holiday season with live musical performances, special guests and the official lighting of the National Christmas Tree. The festivities continue with a daily lighting of the National Christmas Tree, free evening musical performances and a chance to see the 56 state, district and territory trees and their ornaments up close from Dec. 9, 2019 through Jan. 1, 2020.

For more event information and updates, please visit www.thenationaltree.org or follow President's Park on Facebook or Twitter. Join the conversation online using the hashtag #NCTL2019.