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## 'Tree of Hope' comes to City Hall

NEWS

by Seth Hemmelgarn

Published 11/29/2007

A San Francisco-based, LGBT humanitarian aid group is asking everyone to make a wish for the world.

For the second year, Rainbow World Fund will have a "Tree of Hope" in San Francisco City Hall. The organization is inviting people around the world to send their wishes, which will be printed out, folded into origami cranes and hung on the 20-foot white fir tree.

"We created the tree as a way to inspire hope and encourage people to think about what they'd really like for the future of the world," said Jeff Cotter, Rainbow World Fund's executive director.

He added, "The tree also challenges people ... to turn their intentions and wishes into action to help heal the world."

There will be a ceremony in the City Hall Rotunda Wednesday, December 5 that will begin with a performance by the San Francisco Boys Chorus at 5:30 p.m. The tree lighting ceremony will be at 6, followed by a reception.



The ceremony will also feature *Bay Area Reporter* society columnist Donna

Sachet as emcee, singer Veronica Klaus, the Reverend Cecil Williams and Janice Mirikitani of Glide Memorial United Methodist Church, and keynote speaker Bishop Yvette Flunder of San Francisco's City of Refuge United Church of



Last year's "Tree of Hope" in City Hall.  
Photo: Courtesy Rainbow World Fund

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Christ.

Mayor Gavin Newsom, who attended last year, and members of the Board of Supervisors also are expected to be on hand.

Cotter said the tree was inspired by the story of a Japanese girl who died from leukemia after the United States dropped an atomic bomb on the city of Hiroshima. According to Rainbow World Fund's Web site, the girl, Sadako Sasaki, had heard that folding 1,000 cranes would result in one wish being granted. She wished for peace, but died before she finished folding all the cranes. Her classmates finished folding the cranes and she was buried with all 1,000.

In just the first week, hundreds of wishes had already come in from around the world, including Zimbabwe, South Africa, Japan, and countries throughout Europe, Cotter said.

One of the most notable wishes so far has come from Democratic presidential candidate Senator Hillary Clinton (D-New York). Her wish said, "I wish for a world where all people are treated with dignity, respect, and equality, no matter who you are or who you love."

Cotter added that he's heard from the campaign of fellow Democratic candidate Senator Barack Obama (D-Illinois) that his wish is on its way, as is that of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-San Francisco). Rainbow World Fund also plans to solicit wishes from Democratic presidential candidate John Edwards and President Bush, Cotter said.

Cotter said the tree is also notable because it symbolizes a connection between the LGBT and Japanese-American communities. Sisters Vicky Mihara Avery and Linda Mihara, who own the Paper Tree in Japantown, are leading the origami work.

"The project is really special because it's allowed us to join forces with Rainbow World Fund" and get the two communities working together, Mihara Avery said.

The tree is also intended to bring attention to the lack of electricity in Africa. Cotter said the group Africare, which Rainbow World Fund has worked with in the past, is working to make solar-powered flashlights available.

Sending a wish is free, and wishes will be accepted after the lighting ceremony. The tree will stand from December 1 to January 1. For more information, visit [www.rainbowworldfund.org](http://www.rainbowworldfund.org).

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