

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**CONSUL GENERAL OF JAPAN PRESENTS MEMPHIS WITH
SOMEI YOSHINO CHERRY TREES**

In appreciation for millions of dollars in relief from the East Japan Earthquake

Memphis, Tenn.—Motohiko Kato, Consul General of Japan in Nashville, and the Japanese delegation demonstrated their appreciation to Memphis with a gift of three Somei Yoshino Cherry Trees from Japan. In an Arbor Day celebration like no other, the trees were planted as a symbol of friendship between Japan and Memphis in a ceremony at Elvis Presley’s Graceland this morning. This tree planting is supported by the Japan Commerce Association of Washington, D.C., Inc. and JCAW Foundation, Inc.

“As you may know, cherry blossoms have long been symbols in Japan of the fragility of life; life that we must at the same time cherish to the fullest,” said Kato. “Furthermore, spring is the season of a fresh start in Japan, and cherry blossoms give us joy and hope at each turning point of our lives.”

The trees represent Japan’s appreciation for Memphis relief efforts after the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011. Ties between Japan and Memphis run deep, and when disaster struck, many Memphis businesses, such as members of the Japanese Traders and Manufacturers Association of Memphis, combined efforts to provide millions of dollars in relief.

As many as 3,000 trees were presented from Tokyo to Washington D.C. in 1912. Those trees have subsequently become symbols of the friendship felt between Japan and the United States, and like the blossoms that appear every spring this commitment is renewed year after year.

“Japan is the largest foreign investor in the state of Tennessee, with many of those companies located in Memphis,” said Ernest Strickland, director of economic development at the Greater Memphis Chamber. “We have been successful in creating an ecosystem that celebrates Japanese culture, education and business and planting these trees is another way to nourish and strengthen this relationship.”

Graceland was chosen as the destination for the trees because of its worldwide recognition and Elvis’ popularity among the Japanese leaders.

“We are tremendously honored that Graceland was selected by the Japanese delegation and Memphis Chamber as the site for these cherry trees,” said Jack Soden, CEO of Elvis Presley Enterprises. “We look forward to caring for them on the lawn of Graceland and welcoming visitors from around the world who will see them thrive.”

Kato added, "I hope that the cherry blossom trees at Graceland will become living reminders of our thanks and also symbolize the continued growth of the friendship between Memphis and Japan just like the cherry blossom trees in Washington D.C."

The Greater Memphis Chamber is the lead economic development organization for Memphis/Shelby County, and is a private, non-profit, membership-driven organization comprised of 2,300 business enterprises, civic organizations, educational institutions and individuals.

Elvis Presley Enterprises, Inc. (EPE), based in Memphis, manages the operations of Elvis Presley's Graceland, its related exhibits and attractions, including the Heartbreak Hotel, as well as the Graceland archives, featuring thousands of artifacts from Elvis' home and career. In 2013, Graceland was voted the #1 Iconic American Attraction by USA Today and 10Best.com readers. For more information on EPE and Graceland, visit www.graceland.com.

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