



**MetLife**

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**METLIFE JOINS 2012 NATIONAL CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL**  
**MEMBER OF CENTENNIAL HOST COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP CIRCLE**

**Washington, DC and New York, NY** -- February 21, 2012 -- The [National Cherry Blossom Festival](#) today announced [MetLife's](#) support of the 2012 Centennial Celebration. MetLife joins the Festival as a Leadership Circle member of the Centennial Host Committee, the exclusive insurance sponsor of the Festival and is also a presenting sponsor of the [Opening Ceremony](#) on March 25, 2012 at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center.

The Festival's Centennial Celebration, March 20 - April 27, honors the 100 year anniversary of the gift of trees from Tokyo to Washington, D.C. and the enduring friendship between the two countries. The Host Committee is a small group of organizations that has provided significant financial contributions and will provide high level guidance to make the grand commemoration possible. The committee is comprised of a Chair, Leadership Circle and Members.

The National Cherry Blossom Festival's commitment to cross-cultural understanding with an emphasis on Japan is a facet important to MetLife as the company's presence continues to grow globally. MetLife is a leading provider of insurance, retirement plans and employee benefits programs worldwide, with a strong presence in Japan, one of its most important markets.

"We are honored to be a Leadership Circle Member of the Centennial Host Committee and the exclusive insurance sponsor for the National Cherry Blossom Festival during this historical year," said William J. Toppeta, Vice Chair EMEA/Asia, MetLife. "The U.S. and Japan have had a long-standing friendship and the National Cherry Blossom Festival has fostered the continued goodwill and strong relations through its annual event. MetLife is pleased to be part of the celebratory events in the Washington, D.C. area as well as extending the sponsorship by creating festival-inspired events in Japan," added Mr. Toppeta.

In addition to the events occurring in the U.S., MetLife will extend the sponsorship by recreating some of the hallmark events of the festival in Japan for the first time ever, all sanctioned by the National Cherry Blossom Festival. MetLife Alico in Japan, will host a pink-tie party in Tokyo, a limited opening of a Sakura Café to celebrate the Cherry Blossom Festival and a special fundraising activity that will benefit the purchase of cherry blossom trees to be planted in the Tohoku region of Japan, which was affected by the earthquake and tsunami in March 2011. The two and a half month fundraising effort will benefit the purchase of cherry blossom trees, some of which are descended from those originally planted in Washington, D.C.

"We are thrilled that with MetLife's support, we are bringing Festival events to Japan for the first time ever," said Diana Mayhew, president of the National Cherry Blossom Festival. "MetLife's support not only helps elevate signature events in Washington, DC, but reciprocates in Japan, and is reflective of the international friendship and cross-cultural understanding seen throughout the Festival and historic anniversary of the gift of trees."

The Centennial is a five week celebration that heralds spring and pays tribute to 100 years of blossoms with prestigious arts and culture, key environmental initiatives, and more community spirit than ever before. For a full list of events and more information, visit [nationalcherryblossomfestival.org](http://nationalcherryblossomfestival.org).

We hope the planting of the cherry blossom trees in the Tohoku region will be a symbol of renewal for this greatly damaged area of Japan, commented Mr. Toppeta. Hosting National Cherry Blossom Festival events in Japan will also help reinforce the strong partnership of these two great nations.

**MetLife, Inc.** is a leading global provider of insurance, annuities and employee benefit programs, serving 90 million customers in over 50 countries. Through its subsidiaries and affiliates, MetLife holds leading market positions in the United States, Japan, Latin America, Asia Pacific, Europe and the Middle East. For more information, visit [www.metlife.com](http://www.metlife.com).

The National Cherry Blossom Festival is the nation's greatest springtime celebration. The 2012 Festival, March 20-April 27, includes five spectacular weeks of events featuring diverse and creative programming promoting traditional and contemporary arts and culture, natural beauty, and community spirit. The 2012 Festival commemorates the 100th anniversary of the gift of the cherry blossom trees and the enduring friendship between the United States and Japan.

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