



**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:**

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**Chicago's Christmas Ship Committee, Coast Guard  
set for annual re-enactment, delivery of 1,200 Christmas trees for deserving  
families**

**Cutter *Mackinaw* transiting from northern Michigan, scheduled to arrive at Navy Pier  
Friday morning**

**CHICAGO** – The Coast Guard Cutter Mackinaw, serving once again as this year's "Christmas Ship" and loaded with more than 1,200 Christmas trees, is returning to Chicago on Dec. 6, at 8:30 a.m., for a two-day event re-enacting what was an annual Chicago tradition in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

The Christmas trees, purchased by the Chicago's Christmas Ship Committee, will be offloaded on the morning of Saturday, Dec. 7 by members of the Coast Guard and local youth volunteers including the Sea Cadets, Venture Crews, Sea Scouts and the Young Marines, following a brief, public ceremony beginning at 10 a.m.

The ceremony will take place at the west end of Navy Pier near the Captain at the Helm statue. The first tree will be presented to a representative family. The remaining trees will then be loaded onto trucks for distribution by 18 local community organizations to more than 1,200 deserving families throughout Chicago. Ada S. McKinley Community Services coordinates the recipient organizations.

The Mackinaw's reenactment continues a treasured piece of Chicago's maritime tradition. Herman Schuenemann was the captain of the original Christmas Ship. He came to Chicago from Michigan for more than 30 years with fresh evergreens and wreaths for the holiday season during the late 1800s and early 1900s. On Nov. 23, 1912, Captain Schuenemann was at the helm of the fabled Christmas Ship the Rouse Simmons. On that day while transiting from Michigan, Captain Schuenemann and the Rouse Simmons was lost in a storm and sank with a crew of 16 between Kewaunee and Two Rivers, Wis.

During its transit to Chicago this year, the crew of the Mackinaw will hold a solemn tribute and drop a wreath into the waters near the resting place of the Rouse Simmons, which was located in 1971.

Chicago's boating community has been re-enacting the days of the Rouse Simmons landing in Chicago for the past 14 years. The Chicago's Christmas Ship Committee is comprised of and supported by all facets of the Chicago's boating community including: the International Shipmasters' Association; Chicago Marine Heritage Society; the Navy League of the United States; Chicago yacht clubs; Friends of the Marine Community; the Chicago Yachting Association, the Cruise Ship Mystic Blue and others. Navy Pier hosts the event, while staff lends support to this ongoing tradition.

Chicago's Christmas Ship Committee will also host educational programs for local area schools aboard the Mackinaw and Chicago's Tall Ship Windy. More than 300 young students from the Chicago area will learn about the role of the Coast Guard, the "Christmas Ship" tradition, observe a Sea Partners ecology presentation and experience a ship tour by Coast Guard Auxiliary. Members of the Mackinaw's crew and volunteers from Chicago's boating community will decorate the ship on Friday afternoon for the "Chicago's Christmas Ship" event.

The Mackinaw, homeported in Cheboygan, Mich., was commissioned in June 2006 and has a crew of 60. It is one of the Coast Guard's most technologically advanced multi-missioned cutters. In addition to search-and-rescue and maritime law enforcement operations, this charitable activity takes place in conjunction with a scheduled ATON (Aids To Navigation) mission in the southern region of Lake Michigan to remove buoys for winter maintenance and replacement with "winter marks" to protect them from ice damage. Additionally, regular underway crew training and drills are being conducted in preparation for the ship's primary winter mission of ice-breaking to keep commerce moving through the Great Lakes.

Free, public tours of the Mackinaw will be available on Dec 7, from 1:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.

For more information on the Christmas Ship event, contact Capt. Dave Truitt, founding chairman of the Chicago Christmas Ship committee, at 312-222-0500.

For information on the Coast Guard and/or the Mackinaw, or to schedule an interview, contact Chief Petty Officer Alan Haraf, 9<sup>th</sup> Coast Guard District Public Affairs at 630-986-2157 or 216-389-0420 (cell).

