



FOR MORE INFORMATION - CONTACT:

CAPT Dave Truitt, Chicago Christmas Ship, (312) 222-0500, davetruitt@aol.com
LT Lindsay Cook, United States Coast Guard, (630) 986-2131, lindsay.n.cook@uscg.mil
Payal Patel, Navy Pier, (312) 32-595-5073, ppatel@navypier.com

Chicago Holiday Tradition Continues

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

CHICAGO – The Coast Guard Cutter Mackinaw, serving again as this year's "Christmas Ship" and loaded with 1,200 Christmas trees, is returning to Chicago on Friday, Dec. 2, at 8a.m., for a two-day event depicting what was an annual Chicago tradition in the early 1900s.

The Christmas trees, purchased by the **Chicago Christmas Ship Committee**, will be off-loaded on Saturday morning, Dec. 3, by members of the Coast Guard and local youth volunteers from Lincoln Way High School, Boy and Girl Scout Troops, Venture Crews, Sea Scout Ships, Naval Sea Cadets Corps, and a group of AFS Students from the State Department Student Exchange Program, following a brief, public ceremony beginning at 10a.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 representatives from Ada S. McKinley Community Services on behalf of all recipient organizations. The remaining trees will be loaded onto trucks for distribution by more than 20 community service organizations to more than a 1,000 deserving families throughout Chicago.

The Mackinaw's reenactment continues a treasured part of Chicago's maritime tradition. The *Rouse Simmons* was the original "Christmas Tree Ship" that came to Chicago from Michigan for more than 30 years with fresh evergreens and wreaths for the holiday season during the early 1900s. On Nov. 23, 1912, while transiting from Michigan, the Rouse Simmons encountered a severe storm and was lost between Kewaunee and Two Rivers, Wisconsin. Captain Herman Schuenemann and his crew of 16 perished.

During its transit to Chicago this year, the Mackinaw will drop a wreath into the waters near the resting place of the Rouse Simmons.

Since 2000, the Chicago's Christmas Ship Committee has been reenacting the *Rouse Simmons* landing in Chicago. The Chicago 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, US Navy League, Chicago Yacht Club Foundation, Chicago area yacht clubs, Coast Guard Auxiliary, The Tawani Foundation, the Chicago Yachting Association and others.

Chicago's Christmas Ship Committee will also host educational programs for local area schools aboard the Mackinaw. More than 300 children from the Chicago area will learn about the role of the Coast Guard, the "Christmas Tree Ship" tradition, observe a Sea Partners ecology presentation and experience a ship tour by the Coast Guard Auxiliary. Members of the Mackinaw's crew and volunteers from Chicago's boating community will decorate the ship for the "Chicago's Christmas Ship" tree 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 its primary ice breaking and aids-to-navigation missions, the Mackinaw also performs search and rescue and maritime law enforcement.

Tours of the USCGC Mackinaw will be available on Saturday afternoon, Dec. 3rd, from 1:30 to 4p.m.