



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Chicago's Christmas Ship Committee announces the arrival of the New Coast Guard Cutter "MACKINAW" to Chicago loaded with Christmas Trees destined for over a thousand deserving disadvantaged Families**

CHICAGO, Illinois (December 1, 2006) – The brand NEW Coast Guard Cutter MACKINAW, acting as the new "Christmas Tree Ship", is scheduled to arrive at Chicago's Navy Pier for a three day visit, starting on Friday, December 1, 2006 at 8 a.m. to distribute Christmas trees to over a thousand disadvantaged families. *The distribution of the holiday trees to trucks from community organizations will begin off the decks of "Chicago's Christmas Ship" the USCGC Mackinaw on Saturday, December 2, 2006 at 10:00 a.m., after the first three trees are given to three deserving families during the brief public ceremony.* Tours of the USCGC Mackinaw are available December 2-3 from 1:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

The MACKINAW will arrive with a load of Christmas trees purchased by Chicago's Christmas Ship Committee to be distributed to disadvantaged families throughout the Chicago area. 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 with fresh evergreens and wreaths for holiday season during the early 1900's. The "Christmas Tree Ship" the Rouse Simmons, recognized by the Christmas tree tied to her mast as she entered port, was a three masted schooner, the principal means of bringing Christmas trees to Chicago for over 30 years.

Chicago's boating community reenactment of the olden days of the Rouse Simmons landing in Chicago is now portrayed by the USCGC Mackinaw. The trees will be taken off the MACKINAW by local youth volunteers, the Sea Cadets, Venture Crews, Sea Explorer Scouts and the Young Marines and load them into trucks for distribution to over one thousand deserving families throughout Chicago by the Salvation Army. The trees were purchased with money raised by the "Chicago's Christmas Ship" Committee. This committee is comprised of and supported by all facets of the Chicago's boating community: the International Shipmasters' Association, Chicago Marine heritage Society, US Navy League, Chicago yacht clubs, Friends of the Marine Community, Coast Guard Auxiliary and the Chicago Yachting Association to name a few.

Chicago's Christmas Ship Committee will also host educational programs for local area schools aboard the Mackinaw. Over 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 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 occurring on the following day.

The newly commissioned Cutter MACKINAW replaces the original ice breaker, which served the Great Lakes since 1944, and has been donated for use as a maritime museum located in Mackinaw City, Michigan. This new ship which is home to a crew of 54 was built in Marionette, Wisconsin and commissioned in June 2006. It has all of the latest state-of-the art equipment and facilities that one would expect to find on any modern Coast Guard Cutter. In addition to its primary ice breaking and aids to navigation missions, the MACKINAW can also perform search and rescue and maritime law enforcement.

**The MACKINAW's arrival is a culmination of efforts by the Chicago's Christmas Ship Committee, working together with the Coast Guard, Coast Guard Auxiliary, the Sea Partners Program, Chicago Navy Pier, private individuals, and the hard working generous boaters of the marine community to help make Christmas special for deserving Chicago families.**

*Experience THE RENEWAL OF THIS MARINE COMMUNITY TRADITION OF HOLIDAY GIVING Now in its 7th Year*

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