

Media Advisory

Chicago's Christmas Ship
Navy Pier



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Chicago's Christmas Ship Committee welcomes the "Christmas Ship" loaded with trees destined for 1,200 inner city families

Chicago's Christmas Ship continues tradition - 16 years running

CHICAGO – The Chicago's Christmas Ship Committee's reenactment of the olden days of the *Rouse Simmons* landing in Chicago is now portrayed by the Coast Guard Cutter *Mackinaw* (WLBB-30). "The Christmas Ship", is scheduled to arrive at Chicago's Navy Pier for a two-day event, starting Friday, Dec. 4, 2015 at 8:30 a.m. The "Christmas Ship" will arrive loaded with 1,200 Christmas trees purchased by "Chicago's Christmas Ship Committee" to be distributed to families throughout the Chicago area, that would not be able to otherwise have a tree. The *Mackinaw's* reenactment continues a treasured part of Chicago's maritime tradition. The *Rouse Simmons* was the original "Christmas Ship" that came to Chicago with fresh evergreens and wreaths for holiday season during the early 1900's. The "Christmas Ship", the *Rouse Simmons*, was a three masted schooner and was recognized by the Christmas tree tied to her tallest mast as she entered port. The *Rouse Simmons* was the principal means of bringing Christmas trees to Chicago for over 30 years.

The distribution of the Christmas trees to trucks from community organizations will begin off the decks of the "Christmas Ship", the USCGC *Mackinaw*, on Saturday, December 5, 2015 at 10:00 a.m., after the first tree is given to a representative family during a brief public ceremony. The ceremony will include an Air Force JROTC Color Guard, a performance by the United States Coast Guard Academy Cadet Singers and a helicopter fly-over. Tours of the USCGC *Mackinaw* will also be available to the public on Saturday from 1:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

The trees will be taken off the *Mackinaw* by local youth volunteers including Scouting units, Sea Scouts & Naval Sea Cadets and loaded onto trucks for distribution to 1,200 deserving families throughout Chicago utilizing twenty local community organizations coordinated by Ada S. McKinley Community Services. The trees were purchased with donations raised by the "Chicago's Christmas Ship Committee". The Chicago's Christmas Ship Committee is composed of, and supported by, many facets of Chicago's boating community including: the International Shipmaster's Association, Chicago Marine Heritage Society, Chicago Council - Navy League of the United States, Chicago yacht clubs, Friend of the Marine Community, the Chicago Yachting Association, the Tall Ship Windy and others. Navy Pier hosts the annual event.

"Chicago's Christmas Ship Committee" also hosts educational programs for local area schools aboard the *Mackinaw* & Tall Ship Windy. More than 250 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. 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.

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