



HONORING THE LEGACY

ADA S. MCKINLEY  
COMMUNITY SERVICES, INC

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## **Chicago's Christmas Ship sailing to Navy Pier Dec. 4 for annual tree delivery, in partnership between Christmas Ship Committee, Coast Guard, and Ada S. McKinley Community Services**

CHICAGO—More than 1,200 Chicago families will receive free Christmas trees to brighten their holiday season when the Coast Guard Cutter Mackinaw, serving again this year as Chicago's Christmas Ship, returns to Navy Pier Dec. 4.

The joyful tradition of serving the city's communities continues for the 22<sup>nd</sup> year and is the result of wide-ranging coordination led by the Chicago's Christmas Ship Committee and its logistical partnership with the Coast Guard and Ada S. McKinley Community Services.

While the Chicago's Christmas Ship ceremony was closed to the public last year due to COVID-19 restrictions, this year's event will be open to the general public. The tree offloading will start at 8:30 a.m., followed by the official tree ceremony at 10 a.m. featuring dignitaries, including Rear Adm. Michael Johnston, Ninth Coast Guard District Commander, at the Lake Stage at Polk Brothers Park on the southwest wall of Navy Pier, 600 E. Grand Ave.

All are invited to view the Coast Guard Cutter Mackinaw, the largest Coast Guard ship on the Great Lakes, as its crew and volunteers off-load the 1,200 pine trees onto trucks. The Chicago's Christmas Ship Committee procures the trees in Northern Michigan through the support of private donations, and the ship transports them to Chicago while conducting a regularly scheduled mission maintaining buoys on Lake Michigan. Once the trees are unloaded, they are distributed to community nonprofits, coordinated by Ada S. McKinley Community Services.

"We believe that every kid should have a Christmas," said Dave Truitt, founder of the Chicago's Christmas Ship Committee. "And our story, as most of you know, is about bringing Christmas trees to kids and families who would not otherwise have one."

"Christmas trees symbolize the warmth of home. We are happy to join the members of the Chicago's Christmas Ship Committee, the Coast Guard, and Navy Pier to reinforce the value of family and community. Our collective efforts represent the love, caring and compassion of many volunteers who want to bring the spirit of joy into thousands of homes this holiday season," said Jamal Malone, CEO of Ada S. McKinley Community Services.

Through generous volunteer efforts, more than 25,000 trees have been distributed, at no charge to families across the city, for more than two decades. As an important part of Chicago's maritime heritage, this event honors the crew of the schooner *Rouse Simmons*, the original Chicago Christmas Ship, lost with all hands during a gale Nov. 23, 1912 while transporting 5,000 trees to Chicago.

The reenactment of Chicago's Christmas Ship is now a beloved holiday-season event, thanks to the continued efforts of additional partners, including the International Shipmasters' Association, Chicago Marine Heritage Society, Chicago's Navy Pier, the Navy League of the United States, Chicago Yacht Clubs, Friends of the Marine Community, and the Chicago Yachting Association.

### ***For information and interviews:***

- ***Chicago's Christmas Ship committee: Founding chairman Capt. Dave Truitt, 312-222-0500.***
- ***Mackinaw crew: Lt. j.g. Patrick Buell, 231-597-2032; Chief Petty Officer John Masson 216-314-7434.***
- ***Ada S. McKinley Community Services CEO Jamal Malone: Michelle Damico at 312-423-6627, michelle@michelledamico.com.***

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