



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
City of Duluth Communications Office

411 West First Street, Duluth, Minnesota 55802
218-730-5230 | www.duluthmn.gov | Don Ness, Mayor

For more information contact Daniel Fanning, Communications & Policy Director – Mayor's Office
218-730-5307
or Pakou Ly, Public Information Coordinator 218-730-5309

DATE: 06/04/2015

SUBJECT: Media Advisory: Mayor Ness Declares June 5 as David Wheat Day in the City of Duluth

BY: Daniel Fanning, Communications & Policy Director - Mayor's Office (218) 730-5307

Media Advisory: Mayor Ness Declares June 5 as David Wheat Day in the City of Duluth

[Duluth, MN] Mayor Don Ness has declared tomorrow, June 5, 2015, as David Wheat Day in the City of Duluth, as part of an event to honor United States Navy Commander David Wheat. A statue of David Wheat, a Vietnam Veteran and former Prisoner of War who spent 2,675 days, nearly seven and a half years, in captivity, will be unveiled at the event tomorrow, Friday, June 5, 4 pm, at the Commemorative Air Force Lake Superior Squadron, 4931 Airport Road.

The Northland Veterans Services Committee (NVSC) helped raised \$60,000 in community donations for the statue, which was created by local artist Tim Cleary. John Marshall, of NVSC, chaired the project and has been instrumental in making the statue and the event possible. After the unveiling tomorrow, NVSC will begin the process of turning ownership of the statue over to the Northland Vietnam Veterans Association (NVVA), who also own the Northland Vietnam Veterans Memorial located along the Duluth Lakewalk. Like the statue of Tuskegee Airman Joe Gomer, the Wheat Statue will be unveiled at the Commemorative Air Force Squadron and then will eventually be transferred over to the Duluth International Airport where it will be permanently displayed near the Gomer Statue. An agreement was reached yesterday with the NVSC, NVVA, Duluth Airport Authority and the City of Duluth on the placement and ownership of the statue. All parties involved are pleased with the result and honored to be involved with recognizing Commander Wheat, his family, and all 63 prisoners of war mentioned on the monument.

“It’s truly an honor to recognize a hometown and national hero, David Wheat,” said Mayor Ness. “Duluth is proud to call David a native son. The statue will be prominently displayed at the airport in tribute of David and all 63 Vietnam Veterans who became prisoners of war. It will serve as a reminder of their incredible service and sacrifice. The community has really come together to make this possible. We are grateful for everyone involved in that process from the veterans community, those who contributed to the fundraising efforts, our partners at the Duluth Airport who are proudly donating the space, contractors who stepped up to donate their time and materials, the artist who designed the statue, and everyone else involved in this fitting tribute.”

Commander Wheat, a graduate of Duluth Central High School and the University of Minnesota-Duluth, will be in attendance at the event tomorrow along with his family, friends, fellow veterans, city and airport officials, and community members. The public is welcome and encouraged to attend.

WHAT: Unveiling of the David Wheat Prisoner of War Statue

WHERE: Commemorative Air Force Lake Superior Squadron, 4931 Airport Road, Duluth

WHEN: 4 p.m. Tomorrow, Friday, June 5, 2015

WHO: Open to the public

For more information, please contact Daniel Fanning, City of Duluth, at (218) 730-5307 or John Marshall, Northland Veterans Services Committee, at (218) 348-2929.

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