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**City of Duluth - Communications Office**

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**DATE: 10/13/2019**

**SUBJECT: Media Advisory: Operation Frequent Wind Homecoming Press Conference**

**BY: Kate Van Daele, Public Information Officer**

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**Media Advisory**

**Operation Frequent Wind Homecoming Press Conference**

**October 15, 2019 1:00 p.m.**

**Duluth City Hall, Mayor's Reception Room**

[Duluth, MN] Operation Frequent Wind took place on April 30th, 1975 when the USS Duluth and 17 other U.S. ships rescued between 36,000 – 40,000 Saigon refugees as a part of the Vietnam War. The USS Duluth was only supposed to hold 800 marines, took on over 2,000 refugees by placing them in every nook and cranny of the ship. Chinh Pham who was ten at the time of the evacuation and his family were among those to be rescued. Forty-four years later Mr. Pham, his sister, and their parents will make a special trip to Duluth to see the place that the ship that rescued them was named after.

The Pham family will meet with Duluth Mayor Emily Larson on Tuesday, October 15, at 1:00 p.m. in the Mayor's Reception Room of City Hall before leaving to tour the USS Duluth exhibit at the Duluth Depot at 2:00 p.m. From there the family will visit the USS Duluth anchor monument on the lakewalk before paying their respects at the Northland Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

The following is the press release written by the USS Duluth Crewmembers Association in regards to the event.

**Celebration of Freedom Press Release**

On April 30th of 1975, the fall of Saigon began, signaling the end of the Vietnam War; culminating in what is probably the largest humanitarian rescue operation in human history, known as Operation Frequent Wind. All over the area surrounding Saigon, beginning around April 28th, family meetings were taking place, in which families were making the heart wrenching decision which would change their lives forever – stay where they are and risk execution or being sent to re-education camps, where starvation, torture and forced labor were anticipated certainties, or find some way to evacuate to safety, claiming asylum among the 18 American U.S. Navy ships assembled offshore. Both options were a daunting and frightening choice and the decision to evacuate was filled with unknown risks and hardships.

On October 15th, 2019, one such family who made the choice to evacuate to safety in America during Operation Frequent Wind aboard USS Duluth LPD-6, our City's namesake U.S. Navy ship, will be the honored guests of Mayor Emily Larson in a ceremony to be held at City Hall at 1p.m. in the Mayor's Reception Room.

Chinh Pham, who was 10 years old at the time of Operation Frequent Wind, his father, Cuong Pham, mother Chau Ha Dam, sister Minh Chau Pham and their U.S. sponsor Mike May, will be hosted, along with Chinh's wife, Laureen McVay, in a ceremony in which the Pham family will be presented with a Proclamation by Mayor Larson. Chinh's younger brothers, Cong Pham and Chung Pham, who were 9 years old and 6 years old respectively in 1975, also accompanied the family on their journey, but are unable to be present for the ceremony.

Following the celebratory ceremony with Mayor Larson, the Pham family will visit the USS Duluth Anchor Monument on Duluth's Lakewalk, where they will set in place, an engraved commemorative brick. Adjacent to the USS Duluth Anchor Monument, is the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, where the Pham family will pay their respects and present a floral wreath. The Pham family will also visit the USS Duluth exhibit at The Depot.

The Pham family has written a very compelling historical documentary of their journey, that everyone is encouraged to read. As Chinh, now a U.S. citizen and successful attorney explained, "I wrote this, because I want my children to know and understand what their grandparents and father went through, so that they could have the life that they enjoy and a future filled with hope and promise, in America." Their gripping documentary story can be found on the USS Duluth website at [www.ussduluth.org](http://www.ussduluth.org), on the "Sea Stories \* Operation Frequent Wind" page.

We would like to invite the Duluth community to meet the Pham family, give them a warm welcome to Duluth and join in this Celebration of Freedom.

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