

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ms. Soo Lon Moy
Chicago American Museum of Chicago
Phone: 773-746-0100
Email: office@ccamuseum.org

CAMOC Honors Chinese American Military Heroes **With its Newly Expanded Veterans Exhibit**

(Chicago, IL, November 1, 2021) -- The Chinese American Museum of Chicago, CAMOC, is opening its newly expanded Veterans exhibit, *Chinese American Veterans: Unsung Heroes*. Chinese Americans have a long history in honorably defending America having served in every major war and conflict since the Civil War. The more-than-double-the-space, permanent exhibit will open Saturday, November 6th at 11 a.m. CDT, well-timed with the Veterans Day holiday observed annually, on November 11th.

A highlight of the exhibit will be the Congressional Gold Medal of Honor awarded to Army PFC Lew Y. June of Morris, IL, who on January 18, 1945, in Schirrhoffen, France, died in battle by throwing himself onto a grenade to save his squad members. The Chinese American World War II Veterans Congressional Gold Medal of Honor was made possible through the efforts of Chinese American Citizens Alliance. Enacted as Public Law 115-337 in December of 2018, the first Midwest Region's Chinese American Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony was held on October 23, 2021, in Chicago, where June and over 150 veterans were awarded this honor. In the brief period since enactment, approximately 4,000 Gold Medal honorees have been identified. Previous recipients include George Washington, Ulysses S. Grant, Harry S. Truman, the Native American Code Talkers, the Tuskegee Airmen, and Nisei and Filipino soldiers.

Called into service in early 1941 prior to the U.S. joining World War II, many Chinese Americans joined an air unit nicknamed "Flying Tigers" to defend against aerial attacks. An estimated 20,000 Chinese Americans eventually served in World War II in all branches of the Armed Forces and in all theaters of war. They have been distinguished with individual citations from Combat Infantry Badges, Purple Hearts to Bronze and Silver Stars and Distinguished Crosses, including the Medal of Honor, as well as unit citations for valor and bravery.

Chinese American military service women were also indispensable to the success of World War II. Not allowed in combat, they performed essential functions such as intelligence gathering, flying critical logistics missions, training male pilots and ferrying combat aircraft, and providing medical care as nurses and rehabilitation therapists. Many women also joined voluntary service organizations to support the war effort.

World War II served as a pivotal point in Chinese American history. The exclusionary period starting with the Page Act in 1875, followed by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, that lasted well into the 1960s, began to lift with the Magnuson Act of 1943. Many who served in World

War II were granted citizenship. The bachelor society that characterized Chinese American life to this point was transformed through the Chinese War Brides Act of 1946, when over 6,000 Chinese women were allowed to reunite with their husbands and fiancés in the U.S. The “G.I.” Bill of 1944 offered educational, housing and loan opportunities that addressed barriers many Chinese Americans faced previously.

Another highlight of the exhibit will be an updated Honor Roll of Illinois Chinese American Military Service Men and Women. The number of names has almost tripled to 700 from the original roster. The public is asked to contact the museum with any additions to this list.

The history of the Chicago Chinatown American Legion Post 1003 whose effect on veterans’ post-war civilian lives, and community-building youth programs such as the Wah Mei Drum and Bugle Corps and the Boy Scouts, will also be featured.

Among the veteran portraits, original uniforms and documents, additional medals from other wars, and other museum artifacts will be on display.

All visitors will be asked to show proof of vaccination and wear face masks indoors. We thank you for your cooperation.

The Chinese American Museum of Chicago, founded in 2005, is a 501(C)(3) non-profit corporation, dedicated to the advancement in the appreciation of Chinese American culture and its contributions as an important part of the American fabric. It does this through exhibitions, education, and research to preserve the past, present, and future of Chinese Americans primarily in the Midwest.

The Chinese American Museum of Chicago is currently open Wed and Fri 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. and Sat and Sun 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

###