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City Harvest Launches Kosher Food Drives for Passover

New York, NY — City Harvest, the world's first food rescue organization dedicated to feeding New York City's hungry men, women and children, is launching two simultaneous food drives. A Kosher for Passover Food Drive will provide kosher for Passover food such as matzah along with fresh fruits and vegetables for those in need, and the Chometz Food Drive will help Jewish households ensure that leavened products that they are removing from their home can help feed their hungry neighbors.

Each year, hundreds of thousands of Jewish New Yorkers prepare to celebrate Passover by discarding, selling or giving away all leavened products, such as bread or mixtures containing grains like wheat, known as chometz. This year, as part of its successful Kosher Community Project, City Harvest will pick up any canned or packaged chometz from schools, synagogues and other locations in all five boroughs to distribute to some of the more than 600 community food programs they serve throughout New York City. Chometz items will be picked up by April 2.

City Harvest is also running a Kosher for Passover Food Drive in conjunction with the Chometz Food Drive. The Kosher for Passover Food Drive begins on Purim, March 10, and lasts until March 30 and will help feed 44,000 hungry Jews in New York who keep kosher for the holiday. Last year, City Harvest was able to distribute over 300,000 pounds of Passover food to their network of 38 kosher agencies.

“Due to the downturn in the economy we could see a 20 percent increase in demand for kosher for Passover foods this year,” said Rabbi Mayer Mayerfeld, head of City Harvest’s Kosher Community Project. “City Harvest understands the needs of the kosher community and we are committed to providing our constituents with the necessary foods to meet religious requirements,” he added.

According to the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, 244,000 Jewish New Yorkers live with incomes under 150% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines and 104,000 more are “near-poor” — meaning that they earn too much to qualify for government benefits, but too little to be able to put food on the table every day. City Harvest launched a Kosher Initiative in 1999, later called the Kosher Community Project, to provide food to those who observe kashrut, Jewish dietary law. Over the years, the project grew from one van supporting three agencies to become a fully integrated part of City Harvest’s operations, working with 38 agencies that help to feed 44,000 people every month. In 2008 City Harvest distributed over 2 million pounds of kosher food to New Yorkers across the five boroughs.

For information about how your school, synagogue, or organization can run a Kosher Food Drive, call Brian Stern at 917.351.8745 or visit www.cityharvest.org.