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THE GARY ROSENTHAL COLLECTION, JEWISH COMMUNITIES TO PROVIDE MENORAHS, DREIDELS TO KATRINA VICTIMS

Event Set for December 20 at 5:30 p.m. at New Orleans Jewish Community Center

KENSINGTON, MARYLAND, December 1, 2005 – Just in time for Hanukkah, hundreds of Hurricane Katrina victims will be receiving one-of-a-kind gifts next month as part of a special holiday celebration.

The Gary Rosenthal Collection and nearly a dozen Jewish communities across the country will be donating more than 500 menorahs and dreidels to Jewish families in New Orleans to replace pieces that were lost or damaged in the devastating storm. The activity is part of a unique program known as The Hiddur Mitzvah Project, an initiative developed by The Gary Rosenthal Collection designed to teach Jewish youngsters about religion, social responsibility and arts enrichment.

The Hanukkah celebration is scheduled for Tuesday, December 20 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the New Orleans Uptown Jewish Community Center (5342 St. Charles Avenue). More than 200 families are expected to attend the gathering. Rosenthal, along with French Quarter craft gallery retailer Dashka Roth and the New Orleans Uptown JCC, will present the hand-crafted menorahs and dreidels donated by Jewish communities from across the country to the New Orleans families. The gathering also will feature traditional music, games and cuisine.

“This special Hanukkah celebration means so much to our community,” said Hurricane Katrina victim Debbie Pesses, Jewish Enrichment Director of the New Orleans Uptown JCC. “So many people here have lost so much, but, for this one evening, we will have the opportunity to celebrate our Judaism, reconnect with other Jewish families, and return to a bit of normalcy. We are so appreciative of Gary Rosenthal’s efforts to make sure that Jewish families in New Orleans have the opportunity to celebrate Hanukkah this year.”

Prior to Hurricane Katrina, the New Orleans Jewish community consisted of about 9,500 people. It is believed that about 75 percent suffered severe damage to their homes. Currently, there are about 2,000 Jewish people living in the New Orleans area.

“This event will be a homecoming for the Jewish people of New Orleans and mark our community's resilience,” said Dashka Roth, whose store, Dashka Roth Contemporary Jewelry & Judaica, has been affected economically by the disaster. “Typically, you hear about natural disasters or people in need and you think what can I do or how can I help. It is very different being on the other side and needing the help and knowing that other people want to help you.”

The December 20 event will be the culmination of a two-month project in which Jewish communities throughout the U.S. constructed brilliantly colored, cut-glass mosaics that were sent to Rosenthal’s workshop in Kensington, Maryland, near Washington, D.C. The mosaics were melted at 1,500 degrees Fahrenheit, fused into solid pieces, and mounted onto menorahs and dreidels from The Gary Rosenthal Collection.

(more)

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Some of the synagogues and Jewish organizations participating in the project include: Anshei Israel (**Tucson, Arizona**); B'nai Jeshurun (**Pepperpike, Ohio**); Cherry Hill JCC (**Cherry Hill, New Jersey**); Denver Jewish Community Center (**Denver, Colorado**); Jess Schwartz Jewish Community High School (**Phoenix, Arizona**); Schechter Krieger Day School (**Baltimore, Maryland**); Temple Aliyah (**Needham, Massachusetts**); Temple Bat Yahm (**Newport Beach, California**); and Temple Beth Shalom (**Roslyn Heights, New York**).

“This collaborative project will provide a renewed sense of faith and hope to those families who lost so much during Hurricane Katrina. The Hiddur Mitzvah Project activities work to teach Jewish youngsters about the role art plays in Jewish ritual, but also, we hope to teach them about the responsibility of helping others, especially in times of need,” said Rosenthal, a recognized leader in the American craft movement who teams up with Jewish groups around the country to create functional Jewish artwork, such as Torah pointers, menorahs, mezuzahs and Sabbath candlesticks.

Earlier this week, Rosenthal and Denver community leader Renee Rockford brought together Jewish families from the Colorado area to create more than 150 menorahs to be donated next month to Hurricane Katrina victims in New Orleans.

Members of the Denver JCC and the Denver Chapter of the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization as well as workers from a sheltered workshop facility managed by Shalom Denver held events. Additionally, more than 350 Jewish, Christian and Muslim artists and art enthusiasts attending the Windows to the Design art show participated in the menorah-making activity.

“As Jewish people, we are taught that it is a *mitzvah*, or a good deed, to help others in times of need,” Rockford said. “The outpouring of support from Denver’s Jewish community has been overwhelming. It is exciting to see how many different groups and individuals are interested in participating in this special Hiddur Mitzvah Project. We encourage other Jewish communities throughout the country to create similar programs with The Gary Rosenthal Collection in their areas.”

About The Gary Rosenthal Collection and The Hiddur Mitzvah Project

Gary Rosenthal has been sculpting in welded metals for almost 30 years. Together with a team of talented craftspeople, he creates one of the most popular and unique lines of Judaic art in the country: The Gary Rosenthal Collection. Combining copper, brass and steel with brilliant fused glass, the collection has a contemporary style rooted in tradition.

Work from The Gary Rosenthal Collection (www.collectgaryrosenthal.com) has been presented to Presidents from Jimmy Carter to George W. Bush and can be found throughout the world in many fine galleries, private collections and museum shops, including the American Craft Museum, the B'nai B'rith Museum, the Smithsonian’s Renwick Gallery, the Corning Museum of Glass and The Jewish Museum.

The Gary Rosenthal Collection is committed to helping others perform *hiddur mitzvah* (“beautification of the commandment”) and is pleased to offer The Hiddur Mitzvah Project as an entertaining and functional way to perform a service as well as teach invaluable lessons about arts enrichment and community building. For more information about The Hiddur Mitzvah Project, visit www.hiddurmitzvah.org or call 1-800-962-1545.

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