

Thursday, November 30, 2006 — Town & Village



The Gramercy Park Block Association helped serve Thanksgiving dinners to the residents of Kenmore Hall, as well as police officers, park caretakers and others who live and work in the community. (Above) GPBA President Arlene Harrison stands with NYPD Emergency Service Truck 1 Officers Frank Stevens, Todd Sessa, Brian Glacken, Pete Quinn, Soeren Lygum at their annual Thanksgiving dinner served by GPBA.

Gramercy Park Block Association brings Thanksgiving to neighborhood

Once again, members of the Gramercy Park Block Association led by Association President Arlene Harrison and Events Chair Kathleen Scupp brought the spirit of Thanksgiving to others, this time not only here but also to others around the country devastated by Hurricane Katrina and to our severely injured soldiers returning home and those troops still serving in Afghanistan and Iraq. These efforts were part of GPBA's many community service projects known as Neighbors Helping Neighbors.

This year the group helped serve Thanksgiving dinners to the residents of Kenmore Hall, a residence for formerly homeless adults, while others, on the days before the holiday, delivered homemade cakes, cookies and pies to the staffs of the buildings around the Park, the Park caretakers, and the sanitation and postal workers who serve the Gramercy community around the year. On Thanksgiving, Block Association members also brought baked goods to the police officers at the 13th Precinct, and served a complete Thanksgiving dinner to the officers of Emergency Service Truck One.

The GPBA has also continued its support of the people whose lives were shattered by Hurricane Katrina, and to our troops over-

seas and the wounded veterans who are now back in the United States, as part of this year's Neighbors Helping Neighbors Thanksgiving outreach.

"The many hundreds of our members who have supported the Block Association all year have made it possible for us to express our thanks to the people who serve our community, and to show the victims of Katrina and our troops at home and abroad how much they are in our thoughts and prayers," said Harrison.

After Hurricane Katrina struck, the GPBA, working with Calvary Church, had sent hundreds of cartons containing food, clothing, and household goods to New Orleans, Louisiana and Ocean Springs, Mississippi, which Harrison heard about from two Gramercy Park residents whose families were among the thousands who lost not only their homes but their schools and churches as well. Since that time they have been working to rebuild their communities. One school in Lakeview, New Orleans reopened in September, although much of that community, including the family of one of our Gramercy neighbors, is still displaced.

The GPBA was very pleased, as part of its 2006 Thanksgiving project, to have sent a contribution to this Lakeview school,

which will be used to help rebuild its school cafeteria and playground.

Three years ago, Arlene Harrison and her son, Nicholas Cohen, a former U.S. Army 82nd Airborne Ranger, had organized a letter writing and CARE package effort for the troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. This project had galvanized the community into writing letters of support and sending hundreds of packages containing phone cards, toiletries, snacks and whatever else our soldiers had indicated they needed.

This year the GPBA, as part of its Neighbors Helping Neighbors Thanksgiving outreach, contributed to Operation Gratitude, which sends individually-addressed CARE packages to the troops, the Wounded Warrior Project, which provides hospitalized soldiers with backpacks filled with items they need, and Serving Those Who Serve, a program that adapts homes of severely injured returning soldiers to help improve their quality of life and their families' ability to care for them.

"I am very grateful to all my neighbors," Harrison said, "both for their overwhelming support of our Block Association and for their generous support of the many community service projects in which we are involved."