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## **I remember. I serve**

### **Chief Obama Anti-Hunger Official, Former Knicks Star, Local Elected Officials, and Hunger Advocates Mark 9/11 Day of Service and Remembrance by Calling on New Yorkers to Provide Skills-Based Volunteers to Better Fight Hunger**

*Locals remember day and serve in honor of fallen heroes as part of United We Serve Initiative*

The New York City Coalition Against Hunger joined with leading elected and appointed officials, former NY Knicks star John Starks, and service providers today to call for skills-based volunteers to fight hunger. As a part of the first official 9/11 Day of Service and Remembrance, officials met at the Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan, a faith- and community-based social service organization and soup kitchen, to call attention to the growing issue of hunger in New York City and urge more effective volunteer actions to combat it.

Officials urged volunteers to utilize NYCCAH's state-of-the-art, online volunteer matching system, available through a special web site set up to mark 9/11: <http://nyccah.org/911/911.html>. New Yorkers can use this site to search by neighborhood, nearby subways lines, available times, and personal skills sets, etc. to find the anti-hunger volunteer opportunities that fit best with their schedules and abilities.

Yesterday the U.S. Census Bureau released the latest nationwide poverty statistics that showed there were 39.8 million people in poverty in 2008, up from 37.3 million in 2007. The number of people without health insurance coverage rose from 45.7 million in 2007 to 46.3 million in 2008. The nation's official poverty rate in 2008 was 13.2 percent, up from 12.5 percent in 2007. The effects of the economic downturn are highly visible at soup kitchens such as Holy Apostles.

According to Reverend Glenn Chalmers, Executive Director of Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen, "We've seen increased demand for our services, especially since the recession. While volunteers are abundant around the holidays, what we are really looking for are long-term commitments to assist with fundraising."

Joel Berg, Executive Director of the New York City Coalition Against Hunger, said: “We are thrilled to be participating in the President’s United We Serve Initiative in ways that will have the most concrete impact in reducing hunger. The reality is that simply placing more untrained volunteers at food pantries and soup kitchens for short stints or holding additional canned food drives will only make a marginal dent in the soaring hunger and food insecurity in New York City, which, even before the Wall Street downturn, impacted more than 1.3 million city residents. That is why our greatest focus in this effort will be on using volunteers to help struggling New Yorkers obtain the federal nutrition assistance benefits to which they are legally entitled, as well as helping grass-roots feeding programs – most of which are under-staffed and under-funded – to improve their accounting systems, develop web sites, write and edit grant applications, and fill other vital needs.”

Said Kevin Concannon, USDA Under Secretary for Food, Consumer, and Nutrition Services, the chief Obama Administration official in charge of domestic anti-hunger programs: “Today is a day to remember the heroes of 9/11 and honor them through continued skills-based volunteering. At the federal level, we are continuing to build strong federal nutrition assistance programs that provide people with SNAP/food stamp benefits to help alleviate dependency on emergency food programs.”

Bill de Blasio, Chair of the New York City Council General Welfare Committee, said: “Given the tough economic times our City is facing, combating hunger in New York is more important now than ever. Pantries and soup kitchens, like Holy Apostles, are at the front lines of this fight. I will continue to fight to ensure all eligible New Yorkers are enrolled in the food stamp program, and that pantries and soup kitchens receive the support they need and deserve.”

Said Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum, “The Obama Administration has done a great job in encouraging volunteerism, and today, we encourage New Yorkers to come together and volunteer to end hunger.”

Added Donna Smith, State Program Director of the federal Corporation for National and Community Service: “Skills-based volunteers are needed now more than ever to help fight hunger and poverty in America. Pantries and soup kitchens rely mainly on volunteers, so they need help with strategic planning and other long-term assignments.”

The New York City Coalition Against Hunger represents the more than 1,200 nonprofit soup kitchens and food pantries in New York City and the more than 1.3 million low-income New Yorkers who are forced to use them. The Coalition works to meet the immediate food needs of low-income New Yorkers and enact innovative solutions to help them move "beyond the soup kitchen" to self-sufficiency. The Coalition also supports VISTA and AmeriCorps national service participants, who receive small stipends and educational awards funded by the federal government in exchange for significant work fighting hunger in neighborhood across New York City.

More information about the Coalition can be found on-line at [www.nyccah.org](http://www.nyccah.org). To learn more about skills-based volunteering and other opportunities to fight hunger, please visit <http://nyccah.org/911/911.html>.

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