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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

‘GOD AUCTION’ DELIVERS HALF TON OF FOOD TO HARVESTERS

KANSAS CITY, Missouri (July 17, 2011) - Gaia Community, Kansas City’s pagan Unitarian-Universalist congregation, delivered 1,033 pounds of food and goods to Harvesters Community Food Network last week. The food was donated by Gaia Community members and other attendees at the church’s ninth annual God Auction, held Sunday, July 10th. In addition to the food donations, the church raised over \$2,000 in cash to support its activities.

Harvesters’ officials were impressed with the amount of food contributed by the small congregation of about 30 members and said the donation would provide food for 795 meals.

The God Auction is an annual fundraiser at which Gaia Community’s congregants select a patron deity or archetype for the coming year. The event was introduced to the church in 2003 during a yearlong exploration of various pagan traditions. The Egyptian chapter included an ancient/modern concept of a "God Auction," whereby temples of a city would collect donations of food and goods to discern who would be the patron of the city. That temple (and its deity) was then given a place of prominence for the coming year, as well as having additional responsibilities to distribute that wealth and food to the needy.

“This year we had the widest range of patron candidates we’ve ever had,” said David Reynolds, a Gaia Community ritualist who served as MC for the event. “We had the archetype of Rabbit, probably dating back to the Neolithic, as well as Athena, goddess of wisdom from ancient Greece; Freyr, a Norse farming and fertility god; and from two hundred years in the future, *Star Trek’s* Captain James T. Kirk.”

At the event, the patron candidates, portrayed by experienced community members, responded to questions about what they would bring to and ask of Gaia Community and its members should they be selected its patron. During the three rounds of bidding, congregants showed their support by bringing their offerings of food for Harvesters and cash to the “temple” (a decorated platform) of each prospective patron.

“The reason we collect so much food,” explained Reynolds, “is that one item for Harvesters counts the same as one dollar, so you can really make your money go farther by bringing food. Plus, one of the reasons we schedule this fund raiser in the summer is we know it’s a time when donations to Harvesters tend to be low, while demand for food is high with children out of school.”

This year’s four candidates were winnowed from a field of twenty-four by a penny auction running from Spring Equinox (around March 21) to Beltane (May 1). “The first year of the God Auction all of the candidates were from ancient Egypt -- Bast, Hathor, Osiris and Thoth,” recounted Reynolds, “but since then we’ve had patron candidates from many different pantheons. Our 2010 patron was Quetzalcoatl, the feathered serpent deity of Mesoamerica.”

And the winner of this year’s God Auction? “Athena,” replied Reynolds, “but the real winners are the people who will receive the food we donated and our community who enjoys a fun summer event and raises money at the same time.”

Gaia Community meets Sundays at 4 pm at Shawnee Mission Unitarian Universalist Church, 7725 West 87th Street, Overland Park, KS. The church’s website is www.gaiacommunity.org.

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