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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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**NATIONAL CONSUMER RESEARCH SHOWS MANY
AMERICANS MORE STRESSED THAN A YEAR AGO**

Most 2008 massage users sought 'stress relief, relaxation and restoration'

(Golden, Colo., March 5) – National consumer research released today said 81 percent of American adults feel as stressed (45 percent) or more stressed (36 percent) now than they did a year ago and are using a variety of strategies to cope. The research was conducted by Boulder, Colo.-based Harstad Strategic Research and sponsored by Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals (ABMP).ⁱ

Despite the sour economy, the overall use of massage therapy remains consistent: 14 percent of adult Americans had a professional massage in 2008 compared to 12 percent in 2004 and 16 percent in 2006. Those who did not receive a massage in 2008 were more likely to cite their pocketbooks as the reason than has been the case in previous surveys.

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Among those who had a professional massage in 2008, 58 percent said they did so for “relaxation, restoration or stress relief,” and 85 percent of 2008 massage users were satisfied with the experience, predicting they would seek massage again in 2009.

Stress at Home and Work

Massage therapy can play a role in helping consumers deal with trying economic times.

“When many people are curtailing spending on vacations and other big-ticket items, massage is an ideal and lower-cost option for reducing stress,” said ABMP president and nationally certified massage therapist Les Sweeney. “Massage therapy has been shown to reduce stress hormones, relieve anxiety and depression, strengthen the immune system and improve attentiveness, so it’s an excellent strategy for challenging times.”

The nation’s leading mental health association, Mental Health America, recommends massage therapy as a way to diffuse stress. Some employers are turning to workplace massage to help employees cope with uncertain times and increased workloads.

“As employers are looking for ways to manage workplace productivity and stress, perhaps using fewer employees to do more work, some are bringing chair massage into the mix,” Sweeney said. “At about \$1 a minute, it’s an inexpensive way to maintain loyalty, and manage anxiety and lost work time.”

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Massage and Health Care

Another Harstad Research finding was that visits to all types of health professionals, including medical doctors, declined slightly in 2008 as compared to 2006.

“This is not surprising in a year of belt-tightening throughout the economy,” Sweeney said. “It may be a matter of postponing rather than forgoing care. Consumers should keep in mind massage could be useful in helping stave off routine doctor visits, co-pays and missed work time because of the immunity-boosting power of massage.”

The proportion of adults who made at least one visit to a massage therapist (14 percent) again exceeded the proportions visiting a chiropractor (12 percent) or a physical therapist (9 percent). Forty-two percent of American adults have received at least one massage in their lifetime.

Massage as a Gift

The cost of massage has remained stable in recent years, up slightly to a median cost of \$65 an hour in 2008 from \$60 in recent years, the Harstad survey showed. High approval ratings for massage therapy among those who have tried it continue to hold – more than eight out of 10 rated the experience of receiving a massage a positive one. As in past surveys, nearly a third of adults – 27 percent – who got a massage last year did so because they received it as a gift.

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“Thoughtful friends and family have been giving massage as a gift for years and it will probably never be more welcomed than now by the economically stressed or overworked,” Sweeney said. “The more relaxed and healthy people are in these times, the more effective they will be as workers, employers, spouses and parents.”

Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals is a professional membership association serving the massage therapy profession by promoting ethical practice, fostering acceptance of the profession and protecting the rights of legitimate massage and bodywork practitioners. Founded in 1987 and headquartered in Golden, Colo., ABMP is the largest massage membership association in the United States with more than 66,000 members.

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ⁱ The January 2009 Health Care Survey was conducted by Harstad Strategic Research, Inc., the national public opinion research firm in Boulder, Colo. The survey results are based upon 602 random telephone interviews among adults age 21 or older nationwide. Interviews were conducted from Jan. 6 to 11, 2009. A random sample of 602 has a worst-case 95 percent confidence interval of plus or minus 4.0 percent about any one reported percentage.