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**MASSAGE POPULARITY INCREASES; DRAMATIC JUMP
IN USE BY MEN, NATIONAL CONSUMER RESEARCH SHOWS**

(Evergreen, Colo., Feb. 14)—National consumer research released today by Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals (ABMP) again shows the increasing popularity of massage among American adults, continuing a 20-year climb in massage use and acceptance. There was a remarkable jump in the number of men reporting massage use, an increase of 5.3 million men from 2004 to 2006, or growth from 8 percent of male adults to 13 percent. The research was conducted by Boulder, Colo.-based Harstad Strategic Research in January.ⁱ

A full 33.6 million American adults aged 21 or older received at least one massage in 2006, up nearly 9 million from the 2004 level. That represents growth from 12 percent in 2004 to 16 percent in 2006.

“It’s pretty impressive that fully one in six American adults sought out massage therapy during 2006,” says Les Sweeney, nationally certified massage therapist and ABMP president. “It reflects a steady increase in acceptance of, and respect for, massage therapy and massage therapists over the last 20 years.”

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More Midwesterners Seek Massage

Consumers in the West and Midwest are most likely to have received a massage in 2006 – 20 percent and 19 percent respectively in a recent survey, compared with 14 percent in the Northeast and 12 percent in the South. Each of these percentages is up from 2004 levels, with the six-percentage point gain in the Midwest the most dramatic.

Why Americans Seek Massage

There are three primary reasons people seek massage, each representing about a third of all massages delivered. Most seek relaxation and restoration (30 percent), need relief from pain or muscle soreness (29 percent), or have a massage because they received it as a gift (28 percent). Recommendations by medical professionals and receiving gift certificates are primary factors in consumers choosing to get a massage.

Massage as a Gift

Among women who have ever received a massage, 33 percent say the principal reason they got one was because they received a gift certificate; that's the case for only 19 percent of men. Perhaps somewhat correlated, women are more likely than men -- 36 percent compared to 22 percent -- to have received their most recent massage in a spa setting. Massage is a prime example of a trend toward "experiential" gift-giving that other research has revealed.

In a telling finding, men and women who have tried massage differed significantly in their predictions about how welcome a gift of massage would be for their spouses or significant others. Seventy percent of the men thought their loved ones would appreciate a massage gift “a great deal” or “quite a bit,” where only 47 percent of women predicted a positive response.

The lower confidence women exhibit in giving their spouses or significant others a massage gift may be unfounded, given the jump in massage use by men over the last two years.

“This presents an educational opportunity for therapists to let their clients, especially women, know their loved ones would be likely to appreciate a massage, too,” Sweeney says.

High Regard for Massage and Massage Therapists

Americans report overwhelmingly positive feelings about their massage experiences. Ninety-four percent express favorable feelings toward massage therapists, with 69 percent expressing very favorable feelings. Among 2006 massage clients, fully 85 percent voiced very favorable feelings about their most recent massage, with 37 percent rating it a perfect ten-out-of-ten.

Consumers can locate qualified practitioners nationwide at www.massagetherapy.com or by calling 800-458-2267.

Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals is a national professional membership association serving the massage therapy profession. Founded in 1987 and headquartered in Evergreen, Colo., ABMP is the largest massage membership association in the United States with more than 58,000 members.

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ⁱ Telephone survey conducted among a cross-section of 1,008 adults age 21-plus from Jan. 4--11, 2007 by Harstad Strategic Research, Inc.; commissioned by Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals of Evergreen, Colo.