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**MASSAGE THERAPISTS REPORT BOOM  
IN HOLIDAY GIFT CERTIFICATE SALES  
'EXPERIENTIAL GIFT' TREND CITED**

(Evergreen, Colo., Nov. 14) ~ Massage gift certificates are gaining popularity as part of an American trend in “experiential gift-giving,” a survey of massage therapists and other consumer research shows.

Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals (ABMP) surveyed a sample of its membership last week on consumer use of gift certificates and gift cards. Fifty-five percent of respondents said their gift certificate business has increased in the past two years and 54.7 percent expected sales to increase again this holiday season. Nearly 31 percent said they had or would accept online or telephone orders (or both) for gift certificates, to meet the demand for stress-free, last-minute shopping.<sup>1</sup>

Consumer research has shown a dramatic increase in acceptance of massage therapy by Americans over the past decade,<sup>2</sup> as well as a movement in recent years to “experiential gift giving.”

“Experts say the best gift is one the recipient is thrilled to get but wouldn’t buy for themselves,” says Les Sweeney, nationally certified massage therapist and president of ABMP. “Since 96 percent of first-time massage users report a positive experience, massage therapy as a gift is a good bet.”<sup>3</sup>

Thirty percent of consumers said experiential gifts are “musts” for 2006 year-end shopping, according to American Express research released last week.<sup>4</sup>

ABMP massage therapists say their clients want to share massage because they themselves enjoy the experience. One massage therapist reported a customer sought a present that wouldn’t be “re-gifted,” while others clients said they wanted gifts that would

last all year. One father and his two teens bought a once-a-month massage package for mom, and student groups did the same for coaches and teachers.

“With 250 recognized types of massage and bodywork, there’s truly something for everyone,” Sweeney says. “Our website helps consumers select a method and locate a massage therapist in their area.”

Consumers can locate qualified practitioners nationwide at [www.massagetherapy.com](http://www.massagetherapy.com) or by calling 800-458-2267.

Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals is a national professional membership association serving the massage therapy and skin care professions. Founded in 1987 and headquartered in Evergreen, Colo., ABMP is employee-owned and the largest massage membership association in the United States with more than 57,000 members.

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<sup>1</sup> ABMP online survey of 1,000 members with 151 responses, conducted Nov. 3-10, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> National consumer telephone survey by independent national public opinion research firm Harstad Strategic Research, Inc., based in Boulder, Colo.; sample of 1,027 adults aged 21 and older, conducted Jan. 3-11, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> American Express telephone survey of nationally representative sample of 1,013 Americans age, 18+, and 655 of them who plan to purchase a gift card/certificate this holiday season. Conducted by International Communications Research, Oct. 11-15, 2006; [http://home3.americanexpress.com/corp/pc/2006/gc\\_survey.asp](http://home3.americanexpress.com/corp/pc/2006/gc_survey.asp).