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CONSUMER TRENDS COMBINE TO MAKE MASSAGE THERAPY GIFT CERTIFICATES AN IDEAL GIFT

(Evergreen, Colo., Nov. 14) – Two major consumer trends are intersecting this holiday season to create surefire gifts nearly any adult will appreciate – gift certificates for massage therapy.

National consumer research has shown a dramatic increase in acceptance of massage therapy by Americans over the past two decades, with 16 percent of Americans – one in six – having received a massage in 2006, up from 12 percent in 2004. First-time users reported overwhelmingly positive experiences in a January 2007 survey conducted by Harstad Strategic Research and sponsored by ABMP.¹

“That positive response to a first-time massage, in combination with the skyrocketing popularity of gift certificates, makes massage an ideal gift this holiday season,” says Les Sweeney, nationally certified massage therapist and president of ABMP.

Multiple consumer studies released in recent weeks are showing gift certificates and gift cards to be the top choice for holiday shoppers this year, and

further, that they are highly popular with gift recipients. Deloitte's annual holiday survey released this month found these items, for the fourth straight year, will be the top choice for 69 percent of American shoppers. Thirty-nine percent of consumers said they would prefer receiving gift certificates and cards over merchandise.ⁱⁱ

More Than A Luxury

In October, Unity Marketing said consumers of "luxury" goods are spending less on items like jewelry and home décor, but more on experiences like spa services and massage therapy. Other research shows experiential gifts have become more popular with American consumers in recent years.

"While massage may be perceived as a luxury by some, its health benefits are becoming more widely understood," Sweeney says. "We've found the two biggest drivers of people trying massage are gift certificates and recommendations of medical professionals. That makes two outstanding reasons to introduce friends and family members to one of the 250 recognized types of massage and bodywork."

ABMP members said in a November survey the most common reason clients buy holiday gift certificates are because they think the recipient needs a massage for stress or pain relief (83 percent). The second most common reason is the desire of the consumer to introduce the recipient to the massage experience (51 percent).ⁱⁱⁱ

Cost Remains Steady

“A one-hour massage at an average of \$60 is an excellent value, especially since that’s remained stable while other prices have gone up,” Sweeney says. “And some massage therapists offer gift packages for a series of massage sessions to create the gift that keeps on giving. It’s something that can start people down the path to less stressful lives.”

Consumers can find out what to expect at a massage session and choose from thousands of qualified practitioners at www.massagetherapy.com or by calling 800-458-2267.

Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals is the nation’s largest massage membership association with 61,000 members. Headquartered in Evergreen, Colo., ABMP is celebrating its 20th year serving the massage therapy profession.

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ⁱ Telephone research conducted among a cross-section of 1,008 adults, age 21-plus, from Jan. 4-11, 2007, by Harstad Strategic Research, Inc., of Boulder, Colo., commissioned by Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals. 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. Eighty-six percent ranked their massage experience positively, a seven or higher on a scale of ten.

ⁱⁱ Deloitte online survey conducted by an independent research company between Sept. 24 and Oct. 4, 2007, with a sample of 14,135 consumers, www.deloitte.com/us/2007/holidaysurvey.

ⁱⁱⁱ ABMP online survey of 891 members with 91 responses, conducted Nov. 7-13, 2007, and the Harstad 2007 research.