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How Much Do You Love Where you Live?

New Gallup Study Explores Link between “Emotional Connection” and Economic Growth

MIAMI – November 24, 2008 – A new Gallup study explores the link between economic growth and residents’ loyalty to and passion towards where they live. According to the “Soul of the Community” study, the qualities that make people love where they live include social offerings (such as entertainment venues and places to meet), openness (how welcoming a place is) and community aesthetics (such as physical beauty and green spaces).

The first-year findings of the Gallup study, funded by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, surveyed 26 communities where Knight Foundation’s founders owned newspapers. “This is a new way of looking at how engaged residents create successful communities,” said Paula Ellis, vice president for strategic initiatives at Knight Foundation. “The data provide new insights to leaders focused on improving the long-term economic well-being of their communities beyond the immediate challenges of the financial crisis.”

Warren Wright, managing partner for Gallup said: “The study is especially important in the current economic crisis because beyond addressing immediate needs, communities will have to make smart choices to direct resources to areas that have the greatest impact on engaging the community.”

The communities vary in population size, economic levels and how urban or rural they are. Gallup randomly surveyed a representative sample of nearly 14,000 adults from Feb.1 through April 27, 2008, by phone. The following communities were included in the survey: Aberdeen, S.D., Akron, Ohio, Biloxi, Miss., Boulder, Colo., Bradenton, Fla., Charlotte, N.C., Columbia, S.C., Columbus, Ga., Detroit, Mich., Duluth, Minn., Fort Wayne, Ind., Gary, Ind., Grand Forks, N.D., Lexington, Ky., Long Beach, Calif., Macon, Ga., Miami, Fla., Milledgeville, Ga., Myrtle Beach, S.C., Palm Beach, Fla., Philadelphia, Pa., San Jose, Calif., St. Paul, Minn., State College, Pa., Tallahassee, Fla., Wichita, Kan.

The study measured residents’ emotional connection to where they live and compared that to the communities’ GDP growth over the past five years. The findings show a significant correlation. Over

three years, the researchers will analyze the trends to prove whether emotional connection drives economic growth, or the other way around.

Within a smaller microcosm, such as a company, Gallup has been able to show that increasing employee emotional connection will indeed lead to improved financial performance of the company.

The study finds that it generally takes at least three to six years for residents to feel highly engaged in their community. However, there are actions that communities can take to engage residents early after they have moved in. Focusing on helping new residents connect to others in their area can enhance their connection and make them want to stay and say good things about the community.

The study found that in some of the larger communities such as Miami, Philadelphia and Detroit, the key emotional connector was openness (the sense of welcoming to diverse people). "This is important to know in a large city that has struggled to achieve its full potential in attracting diverse newcomers," said Matt Bergheiser, Knight Foundation program director for Philadelphia.

In Tallahassee, social offerings are key. "With two major universities, and as Florida's state capital, we have many opportunities to create more social offerings for our residents," said Mike Pate, Knight Foundation program director for Tallahassee. "The proposed arts and entertainment district in the Gaines Street corridor is one example. These data serve as another important call to action."

Knight Foundation community program directors are sharing the study's findings with community leaders and citizens. They hope to use the data to help create transformational change in their communities.

Gallup and Knight Foundation will conduct the second wave of the survey in spring 2009. The additional data will help show the impact of the economic crisis on emotional community-citizen engagement.

Complete results of the Soul of the Community survey are available online at www.soulofthecommunity.org.

Note to editors:

Media kits are available in the Soul of the Community Media Center at www.soulofthecommunity.org.

About Gallup

Gallup has studied human nature and behavior for more than 70 years. Gallup's reputation for delivering relevant, timely, and visionary research on what people around the world think and feel is the cornerstone of the organization. Gallup employs many of the world's leading scientists in management, economics, psychology, and sociology, and our consultants assist leaders in identifying and monitoring behavioral economic indicators worldwide. Gallup's 2,000 professionals deliver services at client organizations, through the Web, at Gallup University's campuses, and in 40 offices around the world. The Gallup Poll has built its reputation on delivering relevant, timely, and visionary research on what people around the world think and feel. Gallup Poll consultants assist leaders to identify and monitor behavioral economic indicators worldwide.

About Knight Foundation

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation promotes journalism excellence worldwide and invests in the vitality of communities in the United States where the Knight brothers once owned newspapers. Knight Foundation invests in ideas and projects that can lead to transformational change.

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About Soul of the Community

Soul of the Community (SOTC) is a three-year study conducted by Gallup Consulting of the 26 John S. and James L. Knight Foundation communities across the United States employing a fresh approach to determine drivers of emotional community-citizen and its role in community economic growth and wellbeing. The study focuses on the emotional side of the connection between residents and their communities.

The 26 Knight communities include:

Aberdeen, S.D.	Duluth, Minn.	Myrtle Beach, S.C.
Akron, Ohio	Fort Wayne, Ind.	Palm Beach, Fla.
Biloxi, Miss.	Gary, Ind.	Philadelphia, Pa.
Boulder, Colo.	Grand Forks, N.D.	San Jose, Calif.
Bradenton, Fla.	Lexington, Ky.	St. Paul, Minn.
Charlotte, N.C.	Long Beach, Calif.	State College, Pa.
Columbia, S.C.	Macon, Ga.	Tallahassee, Fla.
Columbus, Ohio	Miami, Fla.	Wichita, Kan.
Detroit, Mich.	Milledgeville, Ga.	

In its first year, the study compared residents' engagement level to the GDP growth in the 26 communities over the past five years. The findings show a significant correlation between community-citizen engagement and the economic growth. Over the coming years, the researchers will analyze the trends of both community-citizen engagement and economic growth and prove conclusively whether community engagement drives economic growth or the other way around. Within a smaller microcosm, such as a company, Gallup has been able to show that increasing employee engagement will indeed lead to improved financial performance.

The results of the SOTC study identify innovative approaches to help create new possibilities for long-term progress in Knight communities. The study provides community leaders with an evaluation of what community characteristics emotionally connect residents to their community. Community leaders can use the study's findings to maximize community strengths and address community challenge areas to improve community-citizen engagement. The relationship of community citizen engagement to economic development has particular relevance beyond the current economic crisis as the study's findings can help leaders make long-term and strategic choices about investing in areas that have the greatest impact on engaging the community.

Gallup interviewed a random, representative sample of adults (age 18+) in the 26 Knight communities – nearly 14,000 people in total – from February 1 through April 27, 2008. The surveys were conducted in English and Spanish. Data were weighted to reflect the known adult population by age, gender, race and ethnicity based on U.S. Census data.

SOTC identified 10 domains that were found to have varying levels of impact in driving community-citizen engagement.

1. Basic services – infrastructure supports (highways, housing and healthcare)
2. Economy
3. Safety
4. Leadership and elected officials
5. Aesthetics – physical beauty and green spaces
6. Education
7. Social offerings - opportunities for social interaction and citizen caring
8. Openness/welcomeness – how welcoming the community is to different people
9. Civic involvement - residents' commitment to their community through voting or voluntarism
10. Social capital – social networks between residents

Social offerings is the most important driver of community-citizen engagement overall. Aesthetics and openness/welcomeness to others also have major influence on community-citizen engagement.

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About Knight Foundation

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation promotes excellence in journalism worldwide and invests in the vitality of 26 Knight communities. Knight Foundation focuses on ideas and projects that create transformational change.

For more information, visit www.soulofthecommunity.org.