

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE, Wednesday, November 20, 2002

***STUDY: PARENTS “GOING IT ALONE”—DESPITE AVAILABLE SUPPORT
Search Institute and YMCAs recommend simple remedies, offer parents Self-Quiz***

CHICAGO, Nov. 20—American parents, often hard-pressed, report a sense of “going it alone.” A majority (53 percent) of parents surveyed said they don’t often seek support in the vital and challenging task of raising children and teenagers, according to the “*Building Strong Families*” survey and study, released today by Minneapolis-based Search Institute and YMCA of the USA. Indeed, only 4 percent reported seeking help from friends, family and community organizations.

Parents Say a Little Help Would Go a Long Way!

Interestingly, parents said they were looking for types of support that are easily provided and don’t cost a thing: 78 percent said that talking with other parents about parenting issues would help “very much” or “somewhat.” Similarly, 67 percent said that “others telling them they were doing a good job” would help “very much” or “somewhat.” And 71 percent wanted trusted adults to spend quality time with their kids.

Accompanying the survey and analysis is a Self-Quiz for parents and tips for easing the burdens of parenting. The project is part of an ongoing study of children and families by the Search Institute, a nationally recognized research and social change organization and the YMCAs’ national resource organization, YMCA of the USA. It was made possible by a grant from the Kimberly-Clark Corporation as part of their national sponsorship of YMCA families.

“Parents are central—but often unappreciated—players in kids’ healthy development,” said Peter L. Benson, Ph.D., President of Search Institute. “This study underscores the many positive things parents are doing for their kids. And it challenges everyone in communities to rally together to build strong families and strong kids.”

“As we prepare to celebrate National Family Week, Nov. 24-30, let’s take the opportunity to support this country’s parents, who are entrusted with our nation’s most precious resource — our children,” said Kenneth L. Gladish, Ph.D., national executive director, YMCA of the USA. “This preliminary research

offers a starting place for our efforts. When we reach out to parents, we begin to build strong kids and families, strong communities and a strong nation.”

Ongoing Challenges include Lack of Excellent Relationship with Spouse or Partner

Fully half of parents interviewed (50 percent) said they lacked a strong partner relationship, which the study found a key resource for parenting. And those with a strong relationship — whether married or not — were more likely to feel successful as parents. Parents did not underplay the challenges they face, reporting that their roles were made more difficult by job demands (50 percent), conflicts among children (48 percent), overscheduled children (41 percent) and financial pressures (41 percent).

Despite Immense Challenges, Most Feel Successful

Despite this, and in contrast to the popular belief that young people today receive inadequate parenting and supervision, a third of respondents (34 percent) said they feel successful as parents almost every day. An additional 54 percent said they feel successful “most days” and 89 percent said they teach their children basic values, help their children feel good at something (87 percent), and do many other positive things with their children, showing them love and support (97 percent).

The Search Institute/ YMCA “Building Strong Families” survey was shaped by a panel of outside experts on family and conducted by the Global Strategy Group of New York. Findings were borne out by related Search interviews with many other families of different types, across the U-S. It involved a telephone interview in May 2002 with 1,005 parents with children under 18, margin of error +/-3.1%. Findings follow Search Institute’s landmark work on developmental assets for children and set the stage for an ongoing exploration of parents and families. Complete survey findings available at www.abundantassets.org

Search Institute is an independent, nonprofit, nonsectarian organization whose mission is to advance the well-being of adolescents and children by generating knowledge and promoting its application.

The nation’s 2,493 YMCAs are collectively the largest not-for-profit community service organization and largest providers of child care in the U-S. YMCAs serve 18.3 million people of all faiths, races, ages and incomes, including nine million children. Visit the YMCA Strong Families Zone at www.ymca.net

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Editors are urged to offer readers the Self-Quiz.

For study booklet, interviews, fact sheet, Self-Quiz or topline polling data, contact:

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