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Youth Around the World See Spirituality as Important, Want to Talk About It

Results of Search Institute study show 93 percent of youth believe life has a spiritual dimension

MINNEAPOLIS – November 5, 2008 – A two-year global research project reveals that today’s youth view spirituality as an important part of their lives, though most rarely talk to others about it. Respondents to the far-reaching study, led by Search Institute’s Center for Spiritual Development, included young people from a wide range of cultural and religious backgrounds, spanning 17 countries and six continents.

The study results are being released today during the Spiritual Development Summit, an event leading to the 12th Annual “Healthy Communities • Healthy Youth” Conference in Minneapolis. The study was sponsored by the John Templeton Foundation.

“We have spent two years listening to youth ages 12 to 25 from many countries and traditions talk about spiritual development and its role in their lives,” said Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, co-director of the Center for Spiritual Development. “Many young people are keenly interested in these issues, but relatively few have opportunities to talk with others about the things that really matter to them.”

(more)

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The young people surveyed are most likely to say they are both spiritual and religious (34%), with 23% indicating that they are spiritual, but not religious. They are also mostly likely to see both religion and spirituality positively.

When asked what it primarily means to them to be spiritual, youth in the United States said it means believing there is a purpose to life (41%) and believing in God (33%). In comparison, youth surveyed in India indicated that being spiritual means being true to one's inner self (38%) and believing in God (33%).

Researchers in the multi-method study listened to more than 7,000 young people during a series of focus groups, interviews and surveys. Because of its scope and diversity, this study offers one of the first snapshots of spiritual development across multiple countries and traditions.

Search Institute's Center for Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence (CSD) is a global initiative committed to the advancing scientific study of spiritual development in young people. The center offers tools and resources that allow parents and youth leaders help young people develop spiritually. For more information, visit www.spiritualdevelopmentcenter.org.

About Search Institute: Search Institute is an independent, nonprofit, nonsectarian organization whose mission is to provide leadership, knowledge, and resources to promote healthy children, youth, and communities. To accomplish this mission, the institute conducts research, communicates new knowledge, and brings together community, state, and national leaders. For more information, visit www.search-institute.org.

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