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Y Community Snapshot – National Key Findings

April 2013

Background: As a leading nonprofit dedicated to strengthening community, YMCA of the USA (Y-USA) conducted a national online consumer survey, *Y Community Snapshot*, to take a pulse of how Americans view the quality of life in their communities nationwide. The survey is based on factors such as community member involvement, and the quality of a community's services ranging from education to promoting healthy lifestyles.

Among the key findings:

The Y Community Snapshot Report Card suggests that citizens' perceptions of their communities have not yet improved since last year. The 2013 Report Card GPA (Grade Point Average) is 2.62 (B-), a slight uptick (0.4%) from the 2.61 GPA (B-) a year ago.

- While the perceptions of community performance remained the same, there's a widening gap between what people say is vital to a strong community and how well their communities perform in those areas.
- *Y Community Snapshot* participants **reported an overall 30 percent gap** between what they rank as important community strength drivers and how well their own communities performed in those areas.

When asked what drivers were most important to ensuring a strong community, respondents ranked creating a safe environment for children as #1 for the second consecutive year.

- Americans are setting higher expectations for their communities, especially when it comes to their children's education and future.
- The three drivers that ranked in increased importance (in addition to providing a safe environment for children) were:
 - Education, specifically the public school system, went from #5 to #2 in importance (a +7.4 change from 2012).
 - More Americans stressed the importance of providing job opportunities for teens and young adults (a move to #8 from #11 in 2012).
 - In addition, a focus on early childhood development jumped to #10 from #16 in 2012.

• TOP 10 MOST IMPORTANT COMMUNITY STRENGTH DRIVERS – 2013 vs. 2012	2013	2012	% and Rank Change	
Safe environment for children	1	1	3.2%	○
Local school system (from kindergarten through high school)	2	5	4.9%	↑↑↑↑
Health care, including emergency services	3	3	2.2%	○
A safe, healthy physical environment in general	4	2	0.7%	↓↓↓
Public services (police, library system, transportation, etc.)	5	4	1.5%	↓
Availability of fresh foods (grocery stores, supermarkets, farmers markets)	6	6	2.4%	○
A place to start a family, raise children, build a future	7	7	3.3%	○
Employment opportunities, job training for teens, young adults	8	11	5.3%	↑↑↑↑
Employment opportunities for experienced, displaced, out-of-work, underemployed	9	12	3.9%	↑↑↑↑
Early childhood development / pre-elementary school activities, resources, programs	10	16	6.3%	↑↑↑↑↑↑
Affordable, well-maintained housing (privately owned, rental, public housing)	10	8	2.1%	↓↓↓

A focus on education

- Public education is the number one area *Y Community Snapshot* respondents say they would allocate local tax dollars to in order to strengthen their community.
- 46 percent rate their community’s school system or child’s school as **average or below average** in providing the resources, services, people and programs to help students.
- 63 percent of all Americans surveyed believe an achievement gap issues exists within their community, driven by income, status and wealth differences.
- 72 percent feel the educational achievement gap reduces, limits or negatively impacts a young person’s chances, opportunity or ability to succeed in adult life.
- 72 percent of parents say they currently use or have used some form of childcare.
 - 43 percent of those parents rely upon before or after school programs or daycare.

FOR REPORTERS ONLY: For media inquiries regarding the *Y-USA Community Snapshot*, e-mail us at media@ymca.net.

Methodology:

The *YMCA’s Community Snapshot* was conducted online by Toluna (www.toluna-group.com), from their 2 million plus US opt-in online panel, between February 20 and 25, 2013 and is an opinion survey of 1,500 online interviews with U.S. adults aged 18+ conforming to U.S. Census parameters for age, gender, and region of residence. The survey has a total of 30 questions and a ±2.5 percent – 2.75 percent margin of error at 95 percent confidence for demographic, behavioral, attitudinal and other subgroups within the survey.