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Survey Shows *Don't Trash Arizona* Program Picking Up Momentum

Maricopa County Residents Changing Behavior, Reducing Litter

PHOENIX (Feb. 28, 2011) – Maricopa County residents are recording positive changes in their levels of awareness and behavior when it comes to reducing litter, with 74 percent reporting they did not litter at all during the previous 12-month period.

Those are among the findings of an annual survey conducted for the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) late last year as part of the *Don't Trash Arizona* Litter Prevention and Education Program. The scientifically-valid telephone survey of 601 Maricopa County residents, conducted by WestGroup Research, carries an error rate of plus-minus 4.0 percent.

“We are encouraged by the results of the survey, which show some positive changes in littering behavior in our region,” said MAG Chair Thomas Schoaf, Mayor of Litchfield Park. “The study reveals that the *Don't Trash Arizona* program is making a difference, but we also realize that there is a lot of work yet to do.”

One significant finding is that more than half (51 percent) of Arizona residents indicate they have heard the slogan, *Don't Trash Arizona*, compared to 43 percent recorded in a similar survey in 2006. When only the target audience (males 18-34 years) was measured, the awareness level of the program increased to 58 percent.

Several positive changes were seen in littering behavior. For the first time, the number of residents who stated they don't litter increased to 74 percent, a seven percent increase over 2009 results. In addition, the number of those in the 18-34 male target group who said they had not littered within the past year increased for the third year in a row. And the number of “admitted litterers” declined to 23 percent, the lowest recorded in the history of the tracking study.

On the work-to-do side of the survey, Mayor Schoaf points out that that nearly one-quarter of the residents (24 percent) admitted to having trash blow out of or fall from their vehicle during the 12 month period prior to the survey. This represents only a slight decline from 26 percent recorded in 2009. Twenty-three percent of respondents admitted to the littering of cigarette butts, and there was a significant increase in the number of residents who admitted littering biodegradable items.

Mayor Schoaf said the 2010 survey findings will serve as the foundation upon which MAG will refine its litter prevention and education efforts for fiscal year 2012.

“We will be increasing our messaging about the littering of cigarette butts, which comprise 38 percent of all litter,” said Schoaf. “We are also concerned about the number of people who think that it is okay to litter food scraps or other biodegradable items. Many don't realize it can take up to two years for a banana peel or apple core to completely decompose, and because existing litter tends to attract more litter, can quickly degrade our scenic vistas,” he said.

Other survey highlights include:

- 32 percent said they do not litter when driving a vehicle.
- 14 percent said they tossed trash from a vehicle when no receptacles were convenient.
- 24 percent said they had noticed trash fall out of a pick-up truck or other vehicle they were driving or riding in during the previous three months.

The 2010 Litter Evaluation Survey is available in its entirety at the “press room” section of the website at www.donttrashaz.com.

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