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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**ANNUAL SAMPLE COMPANY CONSUMER MOOD SURVEY OUTLINES
HOLIDAY SHOPPING TRENDS IN CHICAGO AND NATION**

Chicago Shopping Habits Different From Rest of United States

***NOTE TO MEDIA:** Tim McCarty, partner-in-charge, Consumer Business practice, SAMPLE COMPANY LLP, Chicago, available for “show and tell” at retail outlet of media’s choice to discuss hot gifts as outlined in the Consumer Mood Survey*

Chicago, IL, November XX, XXXX – On-line purchasing is one of the hottest trends for the upcoming holiday shopping season, according to the Consumer and Retailer Mood Survey, released in Chicago today by SAMPLE COMPANY LLP in affiliation with the National Retail Federation.

Nationwide, 10 percent of survey respondents will purchase gifts on the Internet this holiday season, double the total in SAMPLE YEAR, proving that E-commerce has changed the way retailers do business and the way people shop. However, Chicago lags behind other big cities like San Francisco, where 25.5 percent of survey respondents shop on the Net. In Chicago, only 9.8 percent of respondents do their shopping on-line.

What’s Hot This Year

So what are the most popular gift items? “The hands-down winner as the most-asked-for gift from Chicago kids was Pokemon,” said Tim McCarty, partner-in-charge, Consumer Business practice, SAMPLE COMPANY LLP, Chicago. “Every variation of this item is popular with children -- cards, games, and all other merchandise with the Pokemon name.”

The perennial holiday queen, Barbie, was another favorite this year. Computer games (Nintendo, Playstation, etc.) were also among the most asked for gifts. The American Girl Doll, a new collector-type doll, was mentioned frequently, as were bikes

and skate boards. Other favorites from prior holidays such as Furbies, Beanie Babies, Teletubbies and Power Rangers returned to the “hot gifts” list. For teens, the overwhelming favorite appears to be music from pop stars such as Backstreet Boys, ‘NSYNC and Britney Spears. Computer games were also popular, as was branded clothing – Tommy Hilfiger, DKNY, Gap, Abercrombie & Fitch, Old Navy, Timberland, Nike and Reebok. In the Windy City, cold cash is a hot gift, with 48.2 percent of a shopper’s budget dedicated to cash gifts, compared to 38.8 percent nationally.

Chicago Consumers In The Mood For Holiday Spending

Chicagoans are in a jolly mood this year. 16 percent of survey respondents plan to spend more than they did last year, compared to an 11 percent response to that same question in SAMPLE YEAR. On average, local consumers expect to spend \$813 this holiday season on gifts. For the first time in several years, women are leading this spending charge. Female shoppers will spend an average of \$907 this year, compared to men who expect to spend \$773. What’s the other big difference between the sexes when it comes to shopping? Men are procrastinators. According to the survey, 29 percent of women start holiday shopping before September, compared to only 17 percent of men.

This positive outlook on holiday spending is encouraging for retailers. Combined November-December sales are expected to rise 4.4 percent from SAMPLE YEAR and profits are expected to increase 17 percent over November and December of last year. This represents one of the most optimistic forecasts in recent memory from retailers. Because of this increase in spending, however, SAMPLE COMPANY and the NRF expect holiday sales to be even stronger than the survey suggests. All indicators have risen from last year --employment, income, confidence, housing values and the stock market, so an increase of 6-6.5 percent in GAF (general merchandise, apparel, furniture/furnishings) sales over combined November/December figures from SAMPLE YEAR is anticipated. If these economic fundamentals and weather remain favorable through December, SAMPLE COMPANY and the NRF predict that GAF sales could possibly reach \$183-\$185 billion.

Where Chicagoans Shop

“Chicago shoppers are bargain hunters,” said McCarty. “This year, 71.6 percent of local consumers have said that they plan on shopping at discount department stores during the holidays. This is about the same as last year, which shows that reasonable prices are a concerning factor to shoppers in Chicago.”

51.6 percent of local consumers plan to shop at large superstores, and 47 percent plan to shop at traditional departments stores. Catalog shopping also continues to be popular with Chicago consumers. 43.7 percent of Chicagoans plan to make catalog purchases this holiday season, up from 38.6 percent last year.

About This Survey

The Consumer Mood Survey , which is designed to measure consumer and retailer expectations about the holidays, is conducted by SAMPLE COMPANY in the fall of every year. In October SAMPLE YEAR, retailers were faxed a questionnaire that was completed by nearly 50 respondents who represented a broad sampling of executives from large and small retailers in general merchandise, apparel, home furnishings and other retail categories.

The SAMPLE COMPANY poll of 1,000 consumers, comprising a representative sample of the population, was conducted by an independent research company via a mail survey that was sent out in late September, with the final returns received by October 18. The consumer poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percent.

The Global Consumer Business Practice of SAMPLE COMPANY is the profession's largest practice dedicated exclusively to serving the needs of retailers and consumer products companies.

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The National Retail Federation (NRF) is the world's largest retail trade association with membership that comprises all retail formats and channels of distribution including department, specialty, discount, catalogue, Internet and independent stores. NRF members represent an industry that encompasses more than 1.4 million U.S. retail establishments, employs more than 20 million people -- about 1 in 5 American workers -- and registered SAMPLE YEAR sales of \$2.7 trillion. NRF's international members operate stores in more than 50 nations. In its role as the retail industry's umbrella group, NRF also represents 32 national and 50 state associations in the U.S. as well as 36 international associations representing retailers abroad. For more information about NRF, visit their Website at www.nrf.com.

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