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SURVEY REVEALS ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IMPACT CONSERVATION HABITS OF VALLEY RESIDENTS

PHOENIX (January 29, 2009) – More than three in five Valley residents or 63 percent say that current economic conditions have caused them to change some of their habits in order to conserve energy and save money, according to a Valley Forward survey on sustainability practices. The non-profit environmental public interest organization commissioned a WestGroup Research telephone survey of 410 Maricopa County households in late 2008 to investigate the correlation between a soft economy and behaviors of residents in positively impacting the local environment.

Most residents who made changes said their efforts were focused on reducing usage of electricity – adjust the thermostat (27 percent), turn off lights (27 percent), change electric plan (17 percent), switch to compact fluorescent bulbs (14 percent) and more closely monitor electricity usage in general (12 percent).

Now celebrating its 40th year of operation, Valley Forward’s 2009 theme is *Healthy Environment, Healthy Economy*. “The survey results indicate that while 62 percent of Valley residents are less concerned about the health of the planet today than they were a year ago, they will change their personal habits to protect the environment and save money,” said Diane Brossart, president of Valley Forward.

Not surprisingly, higher gas prices also impacted behaviors. Close to three in five Valley residents or 57 percent said higher gas prices in October 2008 led them to alter their travel habits. The most common change was to drive less or make fewer trips, which was mentioned by 87 percent of those who have changed their driving habits. More than one in 10 of those responding to higher gas prices said they switched to a smaller or more fuel-efficient vehicle (12 percent) or changed to an alternative fuel vehicle (three percent).

A notable percentage of the residents who altered their driving habits because of gas prices said they turned to alternative modes of transportation in an attempt to reduce their fuel consumption – one in 10 reported they are carpooling more; four percent are riding their bikes more often; another four percent are taking the bus; two percent are telecommuting; and two percent are walking more often. Light rail transit was not yet operating at the time of the survey.

When asked to indicate what environmental policies are most important to them, three of five residents focused on the development of renewable energy resources and /or lessening America’s dependence on fossil fuel. Air pollution topped the list of policies and was mentioned by 15 percent, with global warming rounding out the top five mentions at 10 percent.

Established in 1969, Valley Forward Association is a non-profit organization that brings business and civic leaders together to convene thoughtful public dialogue on regional issues and to promote cooperative efforts that improve the environment and quality of life in Valley communities.