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For information/comment: Dr. Don Levy: 518-783-2901, dlevy@siena.edu

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Annual Statewide Poll of Holiday Spending Plans

Majority Plan to Keep Budget Unchanged in 2016; 51% Will Stay Under \$500 on Gifts; A Quarter to Spend More than \$1000
‘Merry Christmas’ Top Holiday Greeting; 32% Believe in Santa
76% Will Donate to Help Needy; 37% Plan to Volunteer

Loudonville, NY – Fifty-seven percent of New Yorkers plan to spend about the same this year as last on holiday gifts while 31 percent plan to lessen their spending and 9 percent intend to spend more according to a new statewide survey of consumers released today by the Siena College Research Institute (SRI). Just over half, 51 percent, plan to hold their gift spending under \$500, while 24 percent have budgeted \$1000 or more, and a quarter of New Yorkers intend to spend between \$500 and \$1000 this holiday season.

A small majority of state residents, 51 percent, most often say ‘Merry Christmas’ rather than ‘Happy Holidays’ (38 percent) during this time of the year. Thirty-two percent of New Yorkers say that they believe in Santa with St. Nicholas support highest among Catholics and Latinos. Over three-quarters will be making donations of money, food or gifts to charitable organizations that focus on the needy during the holiday season and 37 percent plan to volunteer for organizations that help people during the holidays.

“With most New Yorkers saying that their finances are about the same as a year ago, it’s not surprising that a majority hopes to keep holiday spending about the same. Still, with over sixty percent at least somewhat excited about the holiday season and overall consumer sentiment up slightly from a year ago, and appreciably from 2014, spending may well exceed best-laid plans,” according to SRI Director, Don Levy.

“By two-to-one New Yorkers say that, as much as they can, they will buy practical gifts more than splurging on special items. While we won’t be wrapping up coal, it is more likely we’ll see needs, rather than wants, under the tree,” Levy said. “And, as a sign that consumers hope to stay within their budget, over eighty percent plan to pay now rather than let the bills extend well into 2017.”

Sixty-six percent of New Yorkers plan to conduct at least some of their shopping online this year. Nearly 20 percent of all state residents and a quarter of younger residents as well as 30 percent of those earning at least \$100,000 a year, will do at least 75 percent of their shopping online.

Seventy-two percent of all New Yorkers will put up a Christmas Tree for the holidays but of those, 61 percent have an artificial rather than real tree. Upstaters are most likely to have a tree in their home and while a majority are more inclined to choose an artificial tree, 41 percent of Upstate Christmas trees will be real this year.

The SRI survey of Holiday Spending Plans was conducted November 7-21, 2016 by random telephone calls to 800 New York adults via landline and cell phones. Data was statistically adjusted by age, race/ethnicity and gender to ensure representativeness. SRI reports this data at a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of \pm 4.0 points. The Siena College Research Institute, under the direction of Donald Levy, Ph.D., conducts political, economic, social and cultural research primarily in New York State. For more information or comments, please call Dr. Don Levy, Director Siena College Research Institute, at 518-783-2901. Survey cross-tabulations and frequencies can be found at www.siena.edu/sri/reseseach