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**Iowans continue to see neighbors struggling to make ends meet – are very concerned
-but remain hopeful of improvement**

Northwest Area Foundation National Survey Reveals

- More than half say it takes at least \$40,000 annually to meet basic standard of living needs for a family of four
- Six in 10 say they know people working two or more jobs who are struggling to make ends meet, and their priority is to help them
- Seven in 10 say they think about how well a candidate would help those struggling to make ends meet when they vote

FOR FULL DETAILS: www.nwaf.org

ST. PAUL, Minn. (April 30, 2007) – A nationwide survey released today by the Northwest Area Foundation reveals half of Americans, including half of all Iowans, perceive “a lot” of people are struggling to make ends meet. Whether it might be plant closings, outsourcing of jobs to other countries, default of subprime loans or lack of access to living-wage jobs, Iowans say they are aware of their neighbors’ tough grind. Many of those facing tough times are working full time. More than one-third of Iowans, 43 percent, say they regularly come into contact with people who are struggling to make ends meet, whether that would be through church, work, or elsewhere.

“This survey shows us that despite an improved national economy, there are those who are not prospering,” said Karl Stauber, president and CEO of the Northwest Area Foundation, which commissioned the study. “We need to look behind the job growth data to the quality of jobs available. Americans need living-wage jobs in order to meet basic needs, so they’re no longer waging the paycheck-to-paycheck battle that keeps them struggling, every week and every month.”

Iowans’ steady concern about those struggling to make ends meet comes at a time when 27 percent of all households in the state have an annual income that falls below \$25,000. The percentage of subprime loans in Iowa with payments late by 60-days or more is at 14.6 percent, compared to 12.4 percent nationally.

The survey found for the second year in a row a majority Iowans say it takes at least \$30,000 for a family of four to make ends meet, and more than half, 57 percent, say that it takes at least \$40,000 (nearly twice the federal poverty threshold of \$20,444 per year).

The stronger survey results may have to do with an increased sample size of this year's poll. While the number of national interviews remained the same as the 2005 survey, oversamples in Iowa doubled from 200 to 400.

Hard work doesn't translate into prosperity

Even in an era of a strong stock market and economic growth, many who are working hard aren't prospering. A large majority, 83 percent, say there are some or a lot of people who are working full-time, yet are still struggling to make ends meet in their community. Fifty-seven percent say they know someone who is working two or more jobs and are still struggling to make ends meet.

Financial difficulties hit people who are living in all geographic areas – rural, urban, small cities and towns. In Iowa, people living in rural areas are more likely than those living in the city or suburbs to report seeing people in their communities struggling to make ends meet.

When asked how much a family of four needs each year to meet basic standards of living in their communities, people across the United States and in Iowa cited slightly higher figures than they did last year:

How much income would you say a family of four needs to earn in a year in order to make ends meet in your community?

At least \$10,000	0%
At least \$20,000	11%
At least \$30,000	30%
At least \$40,000	30%
More than \$40,000	27%

(NOTE: U.S. federal poverty threshold for a family of four in 2006 was \$20,444 per year.)

Iowans willing to take action

A majority of respondents say they are willing to do more, pay more and hold elected officials accountable for helping those who are struggling to make ends meet.

“I have seen elected officials jump in and work on poverty reduction,” said Tom French, Mayor of Alta, Iowa. “The city council backed a successful grant proposal for a housing restoration program, and on a community level, congregations are going to poverty-stricken areas of town and working with people. We have an awareness of poverty and I think we are doing something to address it.”

This year’s survey found a slight six-point increase in the percentage of Americans who say they keep these issues in mind at the voting booth. Seventy-two percent in Iowa say they think about how well a candidate would help those struggling to make ends meet.

Expectations for local elected officials

Iowans place more trust in their local government than Americans as a whole do. Nearly half say they always or almost always trust their local governments to do what is right, compared to just under four in 10 Americans. A vast majority of state residents polled say they believe elected officials hold a key role in improving conditions for all. Eighty-eight percent say it is important for local elected officials to help people who are struggling to make ends meet.

The survey shows people have clear priorities for their government officials: good jobs and access to health care remain high on the list. More than three-quarters of Iowans, 86 percent, say attracting and keeping well-paying jobs should be a top priority for their elected officials, while healthcare concerns followed as a close second at 81 percent.

Helping is a high priority

Many Iowans say it is a priority to help those who are struggling to make ends meet, and most say they would be willing to do at least one of the following items to help:

How likely would you be to:	National	Iowa
Join with others in your community to discuss ways to help those struggling to make ends meet:	73%	69%
Take part in a church project to help people struggling to make ends meet:	82%	76%
Adopt a family in need to help them from time to time:	65%	64%
Pay \$50 more a year in taxes if it would go to programs in your own community that help people struggling to make ends meet:	64%	64%
Talk to elected officials in your community about people’s struggle to make ends meet:	69%	69%

Further, Iowans are optimistic about the ability of people in their communities to reduce the number of people who are struggling to get by. More than three-quarters, 84 percent, believe the number of people struggling to make ends meet could be reduced at least by a little. Ninety-three percent of respondents say their community effectively deals with local problems at least some of the time.

For additional information about this survey, and for downloadable graphics and charts generated by survey findings, see www.nwaf.org or call (651) 224-9635.

The Northwest Area Foundation is dedicated to helping communities reduce poverty for the long term. The Foundation works on strategic efforts with a small number of rural, urban, and American Indian reservation communities, and the organizations supporting these efforts, in its eight-state region: Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Oregon and Washington. These states were served by the Great Northern Railway, founded by James J. Hill. In 1934, Hill's son, Louis W. Hill established the foundation. Since 1999, the Foundation has invested approximately \$193 million in community-based poverty-reduction programs. It expects to invest an estimated additional \$75 million within the next two years, at which time it will have completed its first 10 years of operation under a community-based program model. The Foundation does not accept unsolicited grant requests. For additional information, visit www.nwaf.org, or call 651-224-9635.

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The Northwest Area Foundation (NWAf) commissioned Lake Research Partners (LRP) to conduct a national tracking survey to explore the public's perception of poverty in one's own community, attitudes toward the roles of local elected officials, and ways in which to address the issue. The survey was conducted among 4,000 Americans age 18 and older, from March 2 -22, 2007. A total of 800 interviews were conducted nationally, and oversamples of 400 were conducted in each of the following eight states: Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Oregon and Washington. The oversamples were weighted down to reflect their true proportion in the country. The margin of error is +/-3.5 percentage points for the national results and +/-5.0 points for the state results. This is the second survey of its kind, replicating a study NWAf and LRP conducted in December 2005.¹

¹ The 2005 survey also included a national sample of 800 interviews, but the state oversamples only included 200 interviews in each.