

For Immediate Release

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**NEW AMERICA'S RESEARCH GROUP CHRISTMAS FORECAST REVEALS
HIGHEST NUMBER IN SEVEN YEARS TO SHOP *LAST FIVE DAYS*
LOOKING FOR MORE BARGAINS THAN EVER
MORE AMERICANS REPORT MAKING THEIR OWN GIFTS
SELF-GIFTING UP FROM LAST YEAR
THE NUMBER-ONE SELF-GIFT AMERICANS BUYING FOR THEMSELVES?
PAJAMAS!
More Americans Shop Online**

CHARLESTON, SC - November 13, 2012 – According to America's Research Group Christmas Shopping Forecast released today, Black Friday will give retailers a boost with 31.8% of Americans reporting that they will shop Black Friday Weekend looking this year for big ticket items. But the biggest boost will be in the five days before Christmas - call it Christmas Friday through Monday - when more Americans than in the last seven years say they will shop.

"We're calling it the Christmas Hibernation," said Britt Beemer, Chairman and CEO of America's Research Group. "52.6% of Americans say they will 'hibernate' for much of the shopping season and then step out to shop in the five days before Christmas, which we're now calling Christmas Friday through Monday. The reason: Americans are far more bargain driven this year - up from 49% last year - and say they will wait for the deepest discounts of the season, which they believe will be offered in the last days before Christmas. Indeed more Americans report not shopping this Black Friday (38.8% versus 35.2%).

"Christmas retail sales should rise 1.8% to 2.8% this year but that will depend on retailers. Our research shows that if retailers pull back after Black Friday Weekend," says Beemer. "And don't offer bigger discounts than ever before, many Americans will go into hibernation until the last five days before Christmas when retailers are advertising fifty, sixty and seventy percent off," said Beemer. "A combination of the Election and the world-wide impact of Hurricane Sandy, even if only via the pervasive media coverage, have affected consumer spending both psychologically and, for a significant number, financially as well. Nearly 16% of Americans told us that they have been impacted by Hurricane Sandy; and of those, 37.2% describe their impact as serious, very serious or devastating."

According to the Forecast, on Black Friday Americans want far bigger deals, too (44.8% versus 40.6% last year). If they do shop, they are looking for big ticket items (31.8% versus 24.6% last year). Americans also report that they will shop for fewer people than they did last year (shopping for five or less people jumped from 13.7% last year to 20.2% this year). 50.3% will shop at off-price/membership clubs up from 47.8% last year); the number-one gift price range is \$36-\$50 (36.2% up from 26. 2%); credit card usage is down (22.5% versus 24.2% last year); and the types of gifts Americans say they will purchase are mostly small this year (36.8% up from 30.1% last year) - with the trend towards handmade gifts among the most important of the season (27.5% of Americans say they will give homemade gifts).

"The latter is a boon for stores like Michael's and Hobby Lobby," says Beemer. "It also signals a shift in the American psyche towards a quieter, homier focus, again impacted by Hurricane Sandy and the economy. The number of Americans telling us that poor economic conditions will affect their Christmas Shopping was 41.7% last year and is 45.3% this year. This also supports results that the number-one gift Americans are choosing to give themselves is a pair of pajamas.

"Self-gifting remains another key trend," says Beemer. "This year Americans are not only buying themselves gifts in record numbers but they have decided what they want. They want something that brings to mind comfort and peace and staying home at a time when reports are showing that a significant percentage of Americans have lost just that - their homes."

Media on deadline, please call Britt Beemer *directly* at 843-345-0939

Results/Highlights include:

Is your family better off?

In 2011 49.8%; in 2012 53.1%

Regarding your current debt level, do you feel a lot of pressure?

In 2011 24.1%; in 2012 21.4%

Biggest financial hurdle for your family?

In 2011 higher debt 30.5%; in 2012 27.6%

In 2011 higher food cost 16.0%; in 2012 22.2%

What are your Christmas spending levels?

\$501-\$750 in 2011 19.9%; in 2012 25.4%

\$1,001-\$2,500 in 2011 25.3%; in 2012 17.4%

Spending more or less this year?

Less 2011 42.1%; in 2012 40.4%

More 2011 27.3%; in 2012 26.6%

Shopping on-line through your computer

In 2011 18.6%; 2012 20.1%

Shop at more off-price/membership clubs
Yes in 2011 47.8%; in 2012 50.3%

More bargain driven this Christmas
Yes in 2011 49.0%; in 2012 52.6%

More people buying for fewer people this year
In 2011 5 or less 13.7%; in 2012 20.2%
In 2011 over 10 32.7%; in 2012 29.0%

Number-one price range for gifts \$36-\$50
In 2011 26.2%; in 2012 36.2%

Fewer shoppers will go after 0% interest
In 2011 16.7%; in 2012 14.6%

Use credit cards more this year
In 2011 6.4%; in 2012 3.2%

Mall shopping levels improved this year
Shopping there more in 2011 8.6%; in 2012 12.3%

Poor economic conditions impact Christmas shopping
Yes in 2011 41.7%; in 2012 45.3%

Shoppers not going out on Black Friday
In 2011 35.2%; in 2012 38.8%

Expect bigger deals this Black Friday
Yes 2011 40.6%; in 2012 44.8%

More Black Friday weekend shoppers looking for a big ticket item
Yes 2011 24.6%; 2012 31.8%

More gift cards this year in the \$21-\$25 range
2011 21.4%; in 2012 27.6%

Self-gifting up this year
In 2011 36.0%; in 2012 39.7%

More self gifts in \$76-\$100 range
In 2011 12.8%; in 2012 18.1%

PJs still number-one self gift
In 2011 10.8%; in 2012 11.6%

Store advertising impact still huge
Yes 2011 57.1%; in 2012 58.7%

Type of gifts this year mostly small
In 2011 30.1%; in 2012 36.8%

Credit card usage declines for preferred payment
In 2012 24.2%; in 2012 22.5%

Feel not much new this year
In 2011 46.7%; in 2012 52.8%

Parents buying video games
Yes 2011 50.3%; 2012 47.9%

The ARG research consisted of 1000 telephone interviewed November 8 to 11, 2012 at ARG headquarters in Charleston, SC. The error factor is plus or minus 3.8%. The next ARG shopping survey will be conducted November 13-16. The surveys will continue every week through the shopping season.

America's Research Group, one of the nation's foremost consumer research and strategic marketing firms, marked its 30th anniversary in 2009. CEO Britt Beemer is a key resource and advisor to leading brands and top retailers. He is author of *The Customer Rules*, published by McGraw-Hill. Britt Beemer is a winner of the 2012 American Business Award for Executive of the Year - Business Services and Company of the Year - Business Services.