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For immediate release:

Wednesday February 13, 2008

*This poll was conducted by the
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NOTHING COULD BE FINER THAN A GARDEN STATE DINER

*2-in-3 New Jerseyans visit a diner monthly;
Many prefer the flashier restaurant-style establishments*

What could be more Jersey than eating in a diner? They're everywhere in the Garden State. And perhaps that's why many of us slide into a booth at least once a month to order up a burger or omelet from a waitress who invariably calls us "Hun".

The latest *Monmouth University/New Jersey Monthly Poll* found that 29% of state residents eat out at a New Jersey diner at least once a week and another 38% visit a local diner one to three times a month. Another 23% visit one only occasionally and just 10% of New Jerseyans claim to have never set foot in a diner. Garden State men (73%) are somewhat more likely than women (60%) to be monthly patrons.

There are some interesting regional differences in diner patronage. South Jerseyans are the state's diner mavens – 78% of residents in the southern counties visit at least once a month, compared to 67% in North Jersey and 56% in Central Jersey.

While diners tend to be thought of as breakfast or brunch establishments, most patrons say their favorite time of day to have a diner meal is in the evening. Among those who visit on a monthly basis – half (50%) prefer to go in the evening and another 6% use diners primarily as a late night haunt. This compares to 1-in-5 (19%) who say lunchtime is their preferred diner mealtime and 17% who usually go in the morning. Patrons age 50 and over (45%) are more likely than those age 18 to 49 (30%) to head to a diner for breakfast or lunch.

When asked to name their favorite thing to order in a diner, regular patrons offer a veritable smorgasbord of choices. Topping the list are eggs or omelets (17%) and burgers (17%). They are followed by pancakes, waffles, or French toast (10%), sandwiches (10%), fish or seafood (8%), steak (6%), and chicken dishes (5%).

As may be expected, morning folks love their egg dishes (48%) and pancakes or waffles (20%). Those who prefer to go to diners for lunch list burgers (23%), sandwiches (13%), steak (11%), and eggs (10%) as their top choices. Among the evening crowd, dinnertime favorites are burgers (22%), sandwiches (12%), and fish (11%). Late nighters choose eggs (31%) as their number one menu item and they are somewhat more likely than others to say that fries or another side order (9%) is the diner fare that hits the spot for them.

“Something for everyone is certainly an apt description of the New Jersey diner,” said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute. “That not only applies to the menu but to the variety of diner types throughout the state.”

Many Garden State diners have undergone renovations in recent years to attract a diverse clientele, and the poll indicates this strategy is working. A majority (53%) of patrons say they prefer the newer restaurant-style diners. However, there is still an audience for the old fashioned greasy spoon – 27% say they prefer this type of diner and 17% say they like both the old and new style diners equally.

Old or new, one of the main attractions of the New Jersey diner is the seating choices. Nearly 2-in-3 (65%) regular diner patrons prefer a booth to a table and chairs (30%) or the counter (3%).

And what would a Jersey diner be without a waitress who calls you “Hun”? Nearly every diner patron says they have been addressed with this Jersey variant of “Honey”. When asked how they feel when a waitress does this, the vast majority (67%) say they don’t care much either way. For those who do care, 11% say they like being called “Hun,” compared to a similar 13% who don’t like it.

But those waitresses may realize something that most patrons don’t.

“Research has shown that we tend to tip more to people we are familiar with and being called ‘honey’ or ‘hun’ is one way of expressing a level of familiarity, even if it is artificial,” commented Dr. David Strohmetz, a Monmouth University social psychologist who has studied the tactics servers use to enhance their tips.

This poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute by telephone with 801 New Jersey adults September 27-30, 2007. Most of the results in this release are based on a sub-sample of 542 residents who eat in a diner at least once a month. This sample has a margin of error of ± 4.2 percent. These poll results are featured in the February 2008 issue of *New Jersey Monthly* magazine.

DATA TABLES

The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

(* Some columns may not add to 100% due to rounding.)

- How often do you eat out at a New Jersey diner – several times a week, about once a week, a few times a month, once a month, less often, or never?

	TOTAL	GENDER		AGE		REGION OF STATE		
		Male	Female	18-49	50+	North	Central	South
Several times a week	12%	13%	10%	11%	12%	15%	4%	14%
Once a week	17%	20%	15%	16%	20%	18%	10%	22%
Few times a month	19%	20%	18%	20%	19%	18%	17%	23%
Once a month	19%	20%	17%	18%	20%	16%	25%	19%
Less often	23%	17%	30%	25%	21%	25%	30%	14%
Never	10%	10%	10%	11%	8%	8%	14%	8%
Unwtd N	801	383	418	363	420	356	189	230

[THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WERE ASKED OF MONTHLY DINER PATRONS ONLY:]

- What time of day do you usually go to a diner – in the morning, afternoon, evening, or late at night?

Monthly Diner Patrons:	TOTAL	DINER PATRON		GENDER		AGE		REGION OF STATE		
		Weekly	Less often	Male	Female	18-49	50+	North	Central	South
Morning	17%	13%	21%	17%	18%	14%	22%	16%	22%	16%
Afternoon	19%	24%	16%	16%	23%	16%	23%	18%	20%	21%
Evening	50%	52%	49%	55%	45%	54%	45%	52%	45%	51%
Late night	6%	3%	8%	6%	5%	8%	2%	5%	6%	6%
(VOL) All times	7%	8%	6%	7%	8%	8%	7%	9%	6%	6%
Unwtd N	542	239	303	285	257	232	298	234	116	178

- Where do you prefer to sit – at the counter, in a booth, or at a table with chairs?

Monthly Diner Patrons:	TOTAL	DINER PATRON		GENDER		AGE		REGION OF STATE		
		Weekly	Less often	Male	Female	18-49	50+	North	Central	South
Counter	3%	5%	2%	4%	2%	3%	3%	4%	3%	3%
Booth	65%	63%	66%	58%	72%	63%	67%	59%	68%	71%
Table w/chairs	30%	29%	30%	35%	24%	30%	29%	35%	27%	23%
(VOL) No choice	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%	3%	1%	2%	2%	3%
Unwtd N	542	239	303	285	257	232	298	234	116	178

4. Do you prefer the newer restaurant-type diners or the old-fashioned greasy spoon diners?

<i>Monthly Diner Patrons:</i>	TOTAL	DINER PATRON		GENDER		AGE		REGION OF STATE		
		Weekly	Less often	Male	Female	18-49	50+	North	Central	South
Newer, restaurant-type	53%	55%	52%	52%	54%	53%	53%	55%	49%	52%
Old-fashioned, greasy spoon	27%	27%	27%	28%	26%	28%	27%	26%	33%	27%
(VOL) Both equally	17%	17%	18%	19%	16%	17%	17%	17%	14%	19%
(VOL) No choice	2%	2%	3%	1%	4%	2%	3%	2%	4%	2%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	542	239	303	285	257	232	298	234	116	178

5. Many diner waitresses in New Jersey call their customers "Hun". Do you like when this happens to you, dislike it, don't care much either way, or doesn't this happen to you?

<i>Monthly Diner Patrons:</i>	TOTAL	DINER PATRON		GENDER		AGE		REGION OF STATE		
		Weekly	Less often	Male	Female	18-49	50+	North	Central	South
Like it	11%	15%	8%	15%	7%	13%	10%	6%	9%	22%
Dislike it	13%	11%	14%	9%	17%	11%	16%	10%	20%	12%
Don't care	67%	66%	68%	65%	70%	70%	63%	75%	64%	59%
Doesn't happen	9%	8%	9%	11%	6%	7%	10%	9%	8%	6%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	542	239	303	285	257	232	298	234	116	178

6. What is your favorite thing to order in a diner?

<i>Monthly Diner Patrons:</i>	TOTAL	DINER PATRON		GENDER		AGE		REGION OF STATE		
		Weekly	Less often	Male	Female	18-49	50+	North	Central	South
Coffee	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%	1%	3%	2%	2%	1%
Eggs, omelets	17%	15%	19%	17%	17%	16%	19%	17%	25%	13%
Pancakes, waffles, French toast	10%	6%	13%	7%	13%	11%	8%	8%	10%	12%
Bacon, sausage	1%	1%	2%	3%	0%	2%	1%	1%	3%	1%
Sandwich	10%	12%	9%	9%	12%	10%	12%	7%	16%	11%
Burger	17%	18%	17%	19%	15%	22%	11%	25%	13%	9%
Steak	6%	8%	5%	9%	3%	7%	5%	5%	1%	11%
Meatloaf, pot roast	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	0%	3%	1%	0%	3%
Fish, seafood	8%	8%	8%	3%	13%	7%	8%	5%	11%	9%
Chicken	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	6%	5%	4%	6%
Italian, pasta	3%	4%	2%	4%	2%	2%	5%	2%	3%	5%
French fries, side orders	2%	3%	1%	3%	1%	3%	0%	3%	0%	2%
Salad	2%	2%	2%	1%	3%	2%	2%	2%	1%	4%
Dessert	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	0%	1%	2%
Other	4%	4%	3%	5%	2%	2%	7%	3%	5%	4%
(VOL) Can't choose one	9%	9%	8%	10%	9%	8%	10%	12%	5%	7%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	542	239	303	285	257	232	298	234	116	178

The Monmouth University/New Jersey Monthly Poll was designed and analyzed by the Monmouth University Polling Institute research staff. The telephone interviews were conducted by Braun Research on September 27-30, 2007 with a statewide random sample of 801 adult residents. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling has a maximum margin of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such as separate figures reported by gender or party identification, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

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