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New Survey Rates Quality of Life Factors in Northwest Arkansas

*Majority satisfied with region quality of life and amenities;
traffic, pre-K, air travel identified for improvement*

BENTONVILLE, ARK., Feb. 13, 2013 – Northwest Arkansas residents are generally happy and believe they have a high quality of life, but would like to see more affordable high-quality pre-K options, cheaper and more frequent flights to more destinations and less traffic, according to a [recent survey commissioned by the Walton Family Foundation](#).

The survey was conducted by the foundation's [Evaluation Unit](#) and the Survey Research Laboratory at Mississippi State University. Respondents from Washington and Benton counties answered questions about overall perceptions regarding quality of life. Most questions focused on strategic areas of interest for the foundation, though there were also some general interest questions included.

"This survey provides a deeper look at what quality of life means in northwest Arkansas, beyond just job numbers and tax revenue," said [Rob Brothers](#), director of the Walton Family Foundation's [Home Region Focus Area](#). "The results validate many of the foundation's investments and provide a baseline from which to measure future investment strategies."

Quality of Life in Northwest Arkansas *Survey Highlights*

Amenities

- 40 – 63 percent of residents used amenities funded by the foundation (local trails, The Jones Center, Walton Arts Center and Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art)

Education

- 68 – 77 percent perceived kindergarten through higher education to be of good quality
- 52 percent say pre-K offerings are high-quality
- Only 21 percent believe pre-K is affordable

Diversity

- 60 percent say diverse lifestyles and cultures make the area a better place to live

Environment

- 68 percent believe water quality is very good

Economic Development and Infrastructure

- 70 percent say there is too much traffic on the way to work and school
- 60 percent of the respondents report they would like more public transit options

The complete survey report can be [downloaded here](#).

The foundation commissioned the survey in order to assess its grant-making strategy in the northwest Arkansas region. As part of its Home Region Focus Area, the foundation intends to measurably impact the quality of life for northwest Arkansas residents through focused investments in five strategic areas:

- Economic development and infrastructure
- Arts and natural amenities
- Education
- Diversity outreach
- Environmental programs

This strategy is driven by a desire to help the region's major employers attract and keep a high-quality workforce. The foundation is midway through a five-year strategic plan for grant making in the region and made investments of more than \$23.5 million to 36 organizations from January 2010 to August 2012.

Researchers reported that in questions that gauged overall quality of life more than 80 percent of respondents answered favorably on key questions, including:

- Are you happy with life overall? – 94 percent positive
- Do you rate the quality of life as excellent or good? – 85 percent positive
- Do you have a sense of pride in the way your city looks? – 83 percent positive

Respondents shared that the factors most impacting their quality of life are jobs, income and family. Comparing the results to a national survey conducted by the University of Chicago, Northwest Arkansans (94 percent) are happier on average as a group compared to the nation as a whole (91.5 percent).

Approximately 25 percent of those surveyed said they did not have enough money to meet their everyday needs. These residents were mostly white (83 percent) with children under the age of 18 (60 percent). The majority is women (51 percent) with a household income of under \$20,000 annually (52 percent).

Of the residents that have moved to northwest Arkansas in the last five years, 55 percent said they did so for their job, salary or career, while 16 percent did so because of friends and family in the region and 8 percent did so because they believe northwest Arkansas is a good place to live.

Of the area amenities, those that the foundation invests in appear to be among the most popular. Respondents reported using foundation-supported amenities at the following levels:

- Local trails - 63 percent
- Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art - 42 percent
- The Jones Center - 41 percent
- Walton Arts Center: 40 percent

Among the high points were the availability of amenities such as local trails, the Walton Arts Center and also The Jones Center. Respondents indicated they frequently use these facilities. Survey respondents indicated they would like to see improvements in traffic congestion, the affordability and quality of pre-K programs and airline ticket prices at Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport.

Survey results are being made available publicly so that other leading organizations and residents in the region can make informed decisions about shaping the future of northwest Arkansas.

The foundation plans to conduct and share this survey on a biannual basis. Full survey results are available on the [foundation's website](#).

About the Walton Family Foundation

The Walton family has a special commitment to the communities and timeless values that helped launch one of the best-known American success stories. Because of this generation-spanning interest, the foundation invests in programs that measurably improve the quality of life by creating cultural, educational, and economic opportunities in northwest Arkansas, throughout the state of Arkansas, and in the Arkansas and Mississippi Delta region. In 2012, the foundation invested more than \$30 million in home region initiatives. For more information, visit the foundation at <http://www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org> or <http://facebook.com/waltonfamilyfoundation>.