

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Hope Flammer  
hflammer@VoiceQuilt.com  
678.424.6597

**U.S. Women Signal Shifts in Gift Giving During Difficult Economy  
According to National Study by VoiceQuilt™**

*Survey reveals: Women to spend less but focus on sentimental gifts;  
graduation gifts are important; Michelle Obama is first choice for graduation speaker*

ATLANTA - April 21, 2009 – VoiceQuilt™ ([www.VoiceQuilt.com](http://www.VoiceQuilt.com)) today announced the findings of the *2009 National Trends in Gift Giving* study, a nationwide online survey of adult women about their motivations and attitudes behind gift giving. In response to today's economic environment, the vast majority (75 percent) of U.S. women say they will spend less money on individual gifts and 74 percent say they will focus on more sentimental or inspirational gifts.

"It's no surprise that today's economy impacts gift giving," said Hope Flammer, chief executive officer and founder of VoiceQuilt. "Instead of giving fewer gifts as one might expect, women are presenting the same quantity of gifts as in previous years, but are focusing on personal, sentimental and unique gifts rather than extravagance."

For more information about VoiceQuilt, the *2009 National Trends in Gift Giving* study and the *2006 VoiceQuilt Trends in Gift Giving* report, visit [www.VoiceQuilt.com](http://www.VoiceQuilt.com).

**Giving gifts during a difficult economy**

When asked about their gift giving this year, U.S. women overwhelmingly signal a trend toward spending less and focusing on the sentimental:

- Spend less money on individual gifts (75 percent)
- Focus on more sentimental or inspirational gifts (74 percent)
- Give more unique, one-of-a-kind gifts (72 percent)
- Not give as many gifts this year (56 percent)
- Give fewer gift cards and cash this year (55 percent)

Group gift giving is more preferred today than previously. The majority of U.S. women (52 percent) say they prefer group gifts, up from only 42 percent in 2006. Roughly half of all U.S. women participated in group gifts during 2006 and 2009 (51 percent and 47 percent, respectively).

"Especially during difficult times, women search for unique and sentimental gifts that strengthen ties with family and friends," said Flammer. "A group gift supports those connections while enabling women to reduce their spending."

**Getting sentimental**

Emphasizing the more personal nature of gift giving today, the majority (65 percent) of U.S. women say their motivation is to say "I love you," followed by "because I love giving gifts" (52 percent) and "to surprise the gift receiver" (48 percent). Other responses include:

- Because the occasion required a gift (39 percent)
- To thank someone (35 percent)
- Because it was the right thing to do (27 percent)
- Because they gave me something; I needed to reciprocate (10 percent)

- To say I'm sorry (4 percent)
- To outshine or outdo someone else's gift (1 percent)
- Peer pressure; others were doing it (1 percent)

When identifying a gift's most important attributes, respondents put expense at the bottom of the list:

- Original (78 percent)
- Sentimental (77 percent)
- Just for them (74 percent)
- Unique (70 percent)
- Heirloom (54 percent)
- Expensive (19 percent)

### **'Tis season for graduation gifts**

The study indicates the importance of giving graduation gifts. Nearly all respondents (96 percent) believe that giving graduation gifts to a child or loved one is important. Giving graduation gifts to a friend of the family also is important according to more than three-quarters (77 percent) of women. It's important with less intimate relationships, too: almost three-quarters (72 percent) say that giving graduation gifts to the friend of a loved one is important; half (50 percent) of respondents say giving graduation gifts to a distant relative is important.

When it comes to the attributes of graduation gifts, women mirror the attributes for gifts in general: "just for them" (66 percent), sentimental (65 percent), original (63 percent), unique (58 percent), hip or trendy (49 percent), unusual (45 percent), heirloom (40 percent), decadent (26 percent) and expensive (23 percent).

Three-quarters of U.S. women (75 percent) remember what their parents gave them for graduation.

Respondents were asked what a recent graduate had done to earn their respect or make them proud. Half (50 percent) of U.S. women say a recent graduate was disciplined about setting a goal and working hard to achieve it. Graduates also earned respect by being gracious (41 percent) and responsible (30 percent).

When asked which movie would prepare this year's graduates for the real world, the clear winner is "Forest Gump" (34 percent), followed by "An Inconvenient Truth" (16 percent). Tied for third place are "Office Space" and the "Breakfast Club," each with 15 percent.

### **Money and work ethic are top of mind**

Further illustrating the impact of the economy, the "best advice" for today's graduates involves finances and work ethic. One-third (33 percent) of women nationwide say "do not rack up credit card debt," is the best piece of advice while an equal number cite "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Coming in second place is "everything worthwhile takes hard work" with 24 percent of the vote followed by "live below your means and prioritize your finances" with 23 percent.

### **"I told you so..."**

Women were asked about their memories as graduates – especially that piece of advice they found most annoying at the time but most true and valuable now. Nationwide women say these clichés were annoying but true:

- Enjoy it while you can (21 percent)
- One of these days you'll understand (19 percent)

- If the other kids jumped off a bridge, would you follow (12 percent)

### **Significance of voice memories**

If they could give the gift of recorded voice memories, the vast majority (78 percent) of women nationwide say they would, compared to 72 percent in 2006.

If they were graduating today, the recorded voice message they would treasure most would be from mom (42 percent) followed by grandparents and dads, each with 20 percent.

### **Michelle Obama’s star quality**

Hands down, the celebrity mom that women nationwide want to hear from during a graduation address is First Lady Michelle Obama (34 percent). She is followed by Faith Hill (13 percent). Tied for third place are Reese Witherspoon and Julia Roberts, each with 10 percent. Least favorite are Katie Holmes (zero percent), Nadya Suleman aka “Octo Mom” (zero percent) and Lynn Spears (one percent).

### **Gift giving in general**

From 2006 to 2009, the top five gift giving occasions remain the same for U.S. women:

<b>Occasion</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2006</b>
Birthday	95 percent	95 percent
Religious Holiday	89 percent	88 percent
Valentine’s Day	72 percent	67 percent
Mother’s Day	71 percent	67 percent
Father’s Day	66 percent	64 percent

When asked about their two favorite reasons or occasions for giving gifts, the results are similar to 2006 findings. Birthdays (71 percent), religious holidays, such as Christmas (62 percent) and “just because” (25 percent) are still the leaders, compared to 76 percent for birthdays, 60 percent for religious holidays and 22 percent for “just because” in 2006.

The percent of U.S. women giving 10 or more gifts for these occasions is virtually unchanged. In 2009, the majority (59 percent) of women gave 10 or more gifts for religious holidays versus 50 percent in 2006. One-quarter (25 percent) of women gave 10 or more gifts for birthdays versus 27 percent in 2006, and eight percent gave 10 or more gifts “Just Because” versus four percent in 2006.

### **Specialty and personalized gifts**

When asked what specialty and personalized gifts they gave during the previous year, more than half of respondents (51 percent) say they gave an online greeting card, followed by those who say a talking greeting card (38 percent) and an “other” customized gift (27 percent). Other responses include:

- A physical scrapbook or memory book (21 percent)
- A digital photo frame with photos (19 percent)
- A video (19 percent)
- A playlist of CDs or hand-picked songs (17 percent)
- A photo slideshow (14 percent)
- A photo book created online (11 percent)
- A photo quilt or photo blanket (6 percent)

### **About the Survey**

Conducted in March, the *2009 National Trends in Gift Giving* study, sponsored by VoiceQuilt, is based on an online, nationwide survey of U.S. women. Of the 253 participants, 27 percent

live in the South, 26 percent in the Midwest, 24 percent in the West and 23 percent in the Northeast. The survey's margin of error is plus or minus 6 percent. To learn more, visit [www.VoiceQuilt.com](http://www.VoiceQuilt.com) or call 1.800.764.8533.

### **About VoiceQuilt**

VoiceQuilt creates unique keepsake gifts personalized with a lasting collection of recorded voice messages and memories that commemorate holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, graduations and other special occasions. Simply by calling a toll-free number from anywhere at any time, family members, co-workers or friends record toasts and tributes, congratulations, encouragement, stories and more. These personal messages – that delight, inspire, encourage and celebrate – are played by and preserved in handcrafted keepsake boxes which can be shipped anywhere in the U.S. For more information, visit [www.VoiceQuilt.com](http://www.VoiceQuilt.com) or call 678.424.6597.

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### **EDITOR'S NOTE**

Camera-ready charts and graphs of the findings from the *2009 National Trends in Gift Giving* study are available online at [www.VoiceQuilt.com](http://www.VoiceQuilt.com) or by calling Hope Flammer at 678.424.6597.