

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**DESPITE CONCERN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT MOST VALLEY RESIDENTS  
ARE UNAWARE EARTH DAY IS 40 YEARS OLD TODAY**

PHOENIX (April 22, 2010) – More than three in five Valley residents purchase environmentally friendly products and will continue to do so regardless of economic changes. In addition, 93 percent of those polled in a recent WestGroup Research telephone survey commissioned by Valley Forward Association feel it's important for Arizona to focus economic development efforts on solar and other forms of renewable energy.

Despite concern for the environment, however, 70 percent of the respondents are unaware that today – April 22 – marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day, according to findings released this morning at Valley Forward's Livability Summit, a half-day forum taking a forward-looking approach to sustainability.

“That most Valley residents are unaware Earth Day has been around for four decades doesn't diminish the significance of this milestone occasion or impact the number of people that will commemorate it around the globe,” said Diane Brossart, president of Valley Forward.

Earth Day is now observed in 175 countries and is the largest non-religious holiday in the world, with more than 500 million people participating in the celebration founded by the late Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin on April 22, 1970.

On a positive note, 89 percent of residents believe the Valley and State can have both a healthy environment and economy. They cited water supply and air pollution as the biggest environmental challenges facing our region in the next 10 years, with such concerns mentioned by 43 percent and 42 percent respectively. Overcrowding rounded out the top three challenges and was listed by 10 percent of respondents. More than half, 53 percent, of Valley residents feel that what we do now will increase or decrease the threat to our environment over the next decade. Energy resources was mentioned by 70 percent of those polled as the environmental issue that will experience the most positive outlook change in the next 10 years. This is followed by transportation, 58 percent, and water resources at 50 percent.

Planting a tree or plant is the most popular way to celebrate Earth Day in Maricopa County (18 percent). Other common mentions include recycling (six percent), not driving (four percent) and talking about it (four percent).

Established in 1969, Valley Forward Association is a non-profit organization that brings business and civic leaders together to convene thoughtful public dialogue on regional issues and to promote cooperative efforts that improve the livability and sustainability of Valley communities. The organization was founded a year before the first Earth Day and has been advocating for environmental quality in this region for 41 years.