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Is Kansas City Ready for an Aging Population? New Local Survey Reveals Kansas City-Area Residents Concerned About Their City and Themselves as They Get Old; New Website, “By the Decades” Healthy Aging Checklist and Aging Communities Toolkit Offers Help

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Pfizer and Generations United challenge people and communities to define how they want to Get Old

NEW YORK, N.Y., July 11 – More than eight out of ten people who live in the Kansas City area believe they will live a long life, but less than one-third of Kansas City -area residents feel their community is very prepared to support an aging population. And while more than two-thirds of Kansas City-area residents think the quality of life for seniors is better now than in the past, there is an overall feeling of unpreparedness around Kansas City-area infrastructure, according to a new survey commissioned by Pfizer, Inc. and Generations United, an intergenerational advocacy organization. The general feeling of lack of preparedness is seen across all generations – from Millennials to the Greatest Generation. With more than 10,000 people expected to turn 65 every day through 2030, community concerns reflected in the survey centered on inadequate transportation, housing and caregiving for older people. Only a small portion of respondents feel their communities are very equipped in terms of healthcare facilities, home caregiving, transportation, and housing for older people.

Aging well means living in a community prepared to support people as they age. But 41 percent of respondents feel the Kansas City area is not at all prepared to provide appropriate employment opportunities for an aging population and one-third of respondents feel being old is something to fear. On a more positive note, 70 percent of survey respondents believe that people who work past retirement age stay healthier longer and are happier.

“While we’ve seen many improvements in our society for aging populations in recent years, there are still many hurdles that need to be overcome,” says Dr. Freda Lewis-Hall, Chief Medical Officer for Pfizer. “Improvement starts with coming together to redefine how we want to get old individually and in our communities.”

Chronic diseases are the leading cause of disability in the U.S. and according to the World Health Organization, eliminating three risk factors – poor diet, inactivity and smoking – would prevent 80% of heart disease and stroke, 80% of type 2 diabetes and 40% of cancers. Indicating an awareness of the importance of healthy choices, only 43 percent of Kansas City-area residents are very comfortable with their current physical health although 73 percent are generally comfortable with their current age. Less than half (44%) are also very

comfortable about their future and just 46% are very comfortable with getting older in general. Interestingly, more Kansas City -area residents feel comfortable telling people their age (78%) than talking about politics (42%) or religion (57%).

."Our community must be one where citizens of every age can lead productive, fulfilling lives," said Kansas City Mayor Sly James. " I applaud efforts to promote collaborative conversations on how we make Kansas City more inclusive. I want our City to be a great place to grow up and grow old."

To encourage more people to take a more active role in their health at every age, Pfizer is working with Generations United and others to ask Kansas City to consider: how do you want to Get Old? Get Old is an initiative created by Pfizer to encourage productive conversation and actions around aging and living better. Kansas City-area residents can visit a new Pfizer-sponsored website at www.GetOld.com to join the conversation and to find information about healthy aging. Pfizer has also developed a Healthy Aging Checklist, organized by the decade, that provides simple health tips on everything from skin care to preventive care to men and women from their 20's to their 60's. Grantmakers In Aging has also created a series of toolkits, with the support of the Pfizer Foundation, that can be accessed here: Age-Friendly Communities: *The movement to create great places to grow up and grow old in America; Aging Power Tools* and *Age-Friendly America* for communities which want to develop strategies to ensure their citizens have the transportation, housing, health care and employment opportunities needed to Get Old in their own community.

"Our communities should be places where we can grow up and grow old and where, no matter what our age, we feel connected and engaged," says Donna Butts, Executive Director of Generations United, an advocacy organization focused on improving the lives of children, youth and older people through intergenerational strategies, programs and public policies. "Good communities, like lives well lived, don't just happen. They require careful planning and nurturing. Let's start thinking ahead to what Kansas City needs to do to prepare for a healthy, older America."

"I tell my patients to be active participants in their health – it is never too early or too late in life," said Dr. John Amick, founder of Cobblestone Family Health and a leader in Kansas City's first Accountable Care Organization, KCMPA-ACO. "It's important to construct an action plan that reinforces healthy habits, and also understand how to be proactive about potential health threats such as a family history of diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke and obesity, problems which are not easy to live with as you age. Early detection and easy correction can help reduce the risk or severity of future health problems."

Other Key survey findings

- 63% of respondents in the Kansas City- area agree their workplace values diversity of age but their top work related fear is not being able to retire when they want to (63%) followed closely by not being able to get a new job (57%).
- Only 22% of respondents feel the community is very prepared to provide appropriate healthcare facilities for older people and just 15% feel the community is very prepared to provide home caregiving.
- Only 13% feel the Kansas City area is very prepared with transportation options for older people and just 16% see Kansas City as very prepared to provide housing for this population.
- 43% of Kansas City-area respondents feel U.S. politicians portray older generations in a positive way and the same percentage feel the media does, too.
- A large majority (87%) agree that technology allows you to stay connected with the people in your life but that it's a lot of work to keep up with (68%).

The 2013 Get Old survey was fielded by Harris Interactive and included 300 respondents in the Kansas City area, ages 18-plus. The survey was conducted between March 25 and April 12, 2013.

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