

newsworthy trends

Southerners Know There's No Place Like Home

(NAPSA)—East, West, home is best—but the South is where Americans seem to have the strongest connections to their extended families.

A recent study conducted by Modern Woodmen of America, a fraternal financial services organization, finds that residents of the southern United States are more likely than Americans as a whole to say they are very close with their extended family.

According to Deborah Thomason, an associate professor of Family and Youth Development for Clemson University, Clemson, S.C., there seem to be several key ingredients that bind Southern families together more so than their counterparts in other regions of the country.

“Family history, communication and spirituality are probably the main elements that really help keep Southern families connected,” says Thomason, who helped develop the university’s Build Family Strength curriculum. “But they are intertwined and build on one another.”

“It’s good to know where you came from and see traditions and legacies passed down,” says Cindra Bell of Jacksonville, Ark.

“I just always grew up knowing my extended family,” says Bell. “On Thanksgiving my family will have second and third cousins at the family meal.”

The South’s strong faith traditions seem to validate the saying that “the family that prays together, stays together.”

“It’s not a matter of one faith over another,” says Thomason.



A Web site offers helpful tips that can help families get together more often.

“Rather when people have a strong spiritual background they tend to come together more often in the context of their faith for events such as baptisms, confirmations and church picnics.”

“I grew up in church,” says Bell. “After church we all went to Grandma’s house. It is still that way today, with much of my family.”

The key to keeping families strong lies in communication. According to the study, 57 percent of Americans use e-mail to communicate with immediate or extended family at least occasionally. For many families, communication doesn’t happen often enough.

To assist Southerners and others to communicate and gather together more often, Modern Woodmen created the Web resource www.gatherings.info, which offers ways to make gathering together easier.