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CONTACT: Gwen Fariss Newman gwen@eval.org 717-659-0158

IN DEPTH STUDY LEADS TO RE-DEFINED DECISION-MAKING AND DEBATE
AEA recognizes study team with huge impact on teen pregnancy prevention programs

The American Evaluation Association next month will honor a New Jersey-based research team, Mathematica Policy Research, as the recipient of its 2009 Outstanding Evaluation Award. The firm's work has led to major changes in federal policy, federal funding and has resulted in more than 100,000 downloads of the study itself.

The American Evaluation Association is an international professional association with approximately 5500 members representing all 50 states in the US as well as more than 60 countries. Christopher Trenholm and Barbara Devaney – representing Mathematica – will be honored at an awards ceremony on Friday, Nov. 13, during AEA's *Evaluation 2009* conference in Orlando, FL.

Mathematica was tapped in 1998 to spearhead a congressionally-mandated study of abstinence-only education programs intended to reduce teen pregnancies as well as sexually transmitted diseases. The comprehensive nine-year study - undertaken within a politically contentious arena - was noted for its rigor, balance, and impact. The study involved a multitude of stakeholders with varying views and interests, incorporated three rounds of follow up as much as six years after the program, had an 80 percent response rate over time, and ensured strict confidentiality of approximately 2000 teenage participants. The study has been widely cited in news articles and opinion pieces in the *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *NPR*, *BBC* and *ABC News*. Newsweek's Sharon Begley in an article entitled *Just Say No to Bad Science* pointed to the evaluation as a model of good research in a field where it had been sorely lacking. Mathematica's work and influence has been noted for its depth of detail, the intricate involvement of diverse constituents and a long-term highly-confidential protocol that protected participants and heightened the study's success.

"The AEA Outstanding Evaluation Award aims to improve evaluation practice and use by recognizing studies that can serve as models in the future," says Trenholm. "Its acknowledgment of Mathematica's abstinence education evaluation, which used the most rigorous, scientifically based approach to measure program impacts, is a high honor. I am pleased to accept this recognition of Mathematica's contribution to model research and to informing important public policies."

Trenholm is a senior economist and associate director of health research at Mathematica Policy Research. A specialist in evaluation design and methods, Dr. Trenholm was the project director and co-principal investigator of the abstinence-only evaluation. He also has served as principal investigator and project director for several major evaluations measuring the effects of programs aimed at improving the welfare of teens and children. (Currently, he co-directs a large-scale evaluation of adolescent pregnancy prevention approaches for the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The centerpiece of the evaluation is a planned experimental study across eight program sites aimed at reducing rates of pregnancy and contraction of HIV/STDs among adolescents. He also recently served as a principal investigator for two major federal evaluations of the Children's Health Insurance Program and has led a series of studies examining the mechanisms for and effects of expanding public health insurance coverage to eligible-but-uninsured children.

Barbara Devaney is an economist, senior vice president, and director of human services research at Mathematica. She is a nationally recognized expert in risk-reduction programs for youth, maternal and child health, and food and nutrition assistance policy and has played a leading role in many of Mathematica's studies of at-risk youth. She was co-principal investigator of Mathematica's evaluation of abstinence-only education. She also directed two key design studies—one to design a rigorous evaluation of youth risk-reduction programs, and another to design a study of the educational outcomes of school health interventions. She is co-director of Mathematica's Building Strong Families study, a large random assignment evaluation of an intervention to strengthen the relationships of young adults having children. Other evaluations in which she has played a key role have examined the school lunch and school breakfast programs; the Special Supplemental Nutrition Programs for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); and the Food Stamp Program.

Dr. Devaney has served on scientific committees convened by the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences to study nutrition issues. She publishes widely in peer-reviewed journals, including the *American Evaluation Review*, *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, and the *American Journal of Public Health*.

“I am proud to be the recipient of AEA's Outstanding Evaluation Award and would like to thank the organization for this honor,” says Devaney. “The study illustrates how high quality research can dramatically redefine debate and decision-making on controversial, critically important policy issues. I would also like to acknowledge the teamwork of colleagues and partners that made this recognition possible.”

Photographs are available upon request. Please use the contact information above.

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