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**AMERICANS DON'T 'TINKER AROUND'  
WITH HOBBIES, HOME REPAIRS, POLL SHOWS**  
*How Will U.S. Youth Discover Joy  
Of Working With Their Hands?*

ROCKFORD, IL, November 16 – The United States has become a nation of “non-tinkerers,” a new survey shows, and manufacturing leaders say the “hands-off” policy around the house is a leading cause of disinterest among American youth to fill much-needed, future skilled labor jobs in the industrial arena.

Remarkably, in a poll of 1,000 U.S. adults, nearly six in 10 – 58 percent – said they never have made or built a toy. More than a quarter – 27 percent – have not made or built even one item from a list of eight common projects ranging from a dollhouse or piece of furniture to a fence or flower box.

In addition, 60 percent avoid handling major household repairs, opting to hire a handyman, enlist their spouse, ask a relative or contact a property manager. And, 57 percent state they have average or below average skills at fixing things around the house.

“Many Americans simply do not work with their hands anymore, whether it’s to tackle a hobby for pleasure or to handle a necessary household repair,” said Gerald Shankel, president of Nuts, Bolts & Thingamajigs (NBT), The Foundation of the Fabricators & Manufacturers Association, Intl., which sponsored the poll.

“This means young people essentially have no role models when it comes to fixing things themselves or taking pride in building something useful,” Shankel added. “It’s no wonder why so many teens today dismiss the idea of considering a career in manufacturing or one of the manual arts such as electrical, plumbing, carpentry or welding.”

In fact, a separate NBT national poll of 500 teens revealed nearly three quarters – 73 percent – have no or little interest, or are ambivalent, about joining the ranks of blue collar workers as an adult.

“It’s absolutely critical for this mindset to change because when America recovers from our economic downturn, there will be a dire need for skilled manpower in the trades,” said Shankel.

“Numerous surveys conducted by organizations in manufacturing predict a labor shortage if we don’t inform the nation’s youth about the available opportunities and enlist them to fill the sophisticated, high-tech jobs in areas such as robotics and lasers,” he said. One report from The Hudson Institute predicts the supply of skilled labor in the U.S. will not catch up to demand until the year 2050.

“We need to convey that such occupations are honorable ones and truly contribute to the future prosperity of America,” Shankel said. “If adults are not showing by example the joys and feelings of accomplishment gained from tinkering, they at least should take time each week to encourage children to play with plastic tools or even take a household item apart and put it back together.”

It does appear parental support for this cause exists in America, according to the NBT poll. More than half – 56 percent – of the adults surveyed who have children would recommend their sons and daughters pursue a manufacturing career or another kind of technical work such as welding, plumbing, construction, electrical or equipment repair.

“This finding is quite encouraging,” Shankel added. “We also must gain support from educators at all levels to position manufacturing and the manual arts as worthwhile, fulfilling career paths.”

One NBT initiative that meets this goal offers grants to not-for-profit organizations and educational institutions that introduce young people to careers in the trades through manufacturing summer camps for youth. Another initiative provides scholarships to students at colleges and trade schools who are pursuing studies that lead to careers in manufacturing. More information on NBT and how to support such programs is available by visiting [www.NutsAndBoltsFoundation.org](http://www.NutsAndBoltsFoundation.org).

Based in Rockford, Ill., the Fabricators & Manufacturers Association, International, is a professional organization with more than 2,100 members working together to improve the metal forming and fabricating industry.

The NBT poll results are based on the responses of 1,000 adults in the United States who participated in a telephone survey September 11-14, 2009. Results are accurate to +/-3 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level and can be generalized to the entire U.S. adult population.

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