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**MetLife Foundation and American Society on Aging Launch
Brain Health Awareness Study
National Survey to Test Public Knowledge of Cognitive Fitness Activities**

San Francisco, CA – January 31, 2006 – Americans may understand the concept of “use it or lose it” when it comes to keeping the brain healthy as they age, but do most people really know what they should do to keep their brain healthy? To test the level of awareness in the population most at risk, the American Society on Aging (ASA) will conduct a national telephone survey of individuals over 50, in order to determine how aware mature adults are of advances in protecting cognitive fitness through nutrition, exercise, mental stimulation, safety and support. Funded by MetLife Foundation, the poll, which is expected to take place in February, will capture the type of information older Americans find compelling and gauge their knowledge of popular advice — all leading to an increased use of reliable activities to help preserve brain health.

Recent research has indicated that the Boomer generation is especially concerned about cognitive function, desiring both to attain maximum capability and to reclaim function where there may have been loss. New scientific findings about the ability of the human brain to remain vital at every stage of life have spurred numerous cognitive fitness activities, diets, treatments and recommendations in the mainstream media and popular culture. However, not all recommendations are based on scientific evidence and there exists a good deal of marketing hype for products that may have little or no relationship to validated scientific work.

ASA and MetLife Foundation believe increased public awareness of the issue, as a result of the study and subsequent media outreach, may stimulate more validated programs, which will help to preserve cognitive fitness provided as services for older Americans.

The study will outline the steps participants currently take to maintain their cognitive fitness in the areas of nutrition, exercise, and mental stimulation. It will also measure the degree of importance placed on research and education of this topic, compared to other major mental and physical health areas. The results are anticipated to be made available to the public this summer.

“MetLife Foundation is pleased to support this initiative to learn more about older adults and their mental fitness needs. This study will help us all in identifying realistic approaches to life-long healthy living, separating perception and practice,” said MetLife Foundation President Sibyl Jacobson.

“Knowing how older adults understand the issues of brain health and the new and emerging science of cognitive fitness, we may well find that there is a significant disconnect between the kind of research the public would support and what policy makers perceive as needed,” said ASA CEO Gloria Cavanaugh.

MetLife Foundation was established in 1976 by MetLife to carry on its long-standing tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. Grants support health, education, civic and cultural programs. In aging, the Foundation funds programs that promote healthy aging and address issues of caregiving, intergenerational activities, mental fitness, and volunteerism. The Foundation also supports research on Alzheimer’s disease through its Awards for Medical Research program. More information about the Foundation is available at www.metlife.org.

The American Society on Aging (ASA), based in San Francisco, California, is the largest nonprofit, non-partisan membership organization of 5000 professionals in the field of aging. Founded in 1954, ASA’s mission is to promote the well-being of aging people and their families by enhancing the abilities and commitment of those who work with them. To that end, ASA provides educational programming, publications and training resources to a wide variety of professionals—researchers, practitioners, educators, business people and policymakers. For more information about ASA, visit www.asaging.org.

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