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**Report: Kent County Leads Nation in Employment
Recovery for Large Counties**

GRAND RAPIDS - Kent County is excelling in employment statistics, becoming the first county in the U.S. with more than 500,000 residents to reach the pre-recession unemployment rate. Growth in the private sector and public-private collaborations are fueling recovery here at a faster pace than most other communities. The **2014 County Economic Tracker: Progress through Adversity** by the National Association of Counties (NACo) says Kent County's unemployment rate is the lowest it has been in a decade. Right now, unemployment in Kent County is 3.5%.

"We are pleased that Kent County's economy is rebounding and continues to show improvement," said Kent County Administrator/Controller Daryl Delabbio. "We attribute this, in part, to our superb public-private-nonprofit partnerships and the collaborative environment that exists, along with the innovative spirit that our community has historically demonstrated. Having the expertise of programs like The Right Place and the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce is invaluable to our residents."

The Right Place Program efforts in Kent County have resulted in the following:

2012 Jobs Retained:	55 (45 were locally-based MedDirect, after acquisition by MedData in Ohio)
New Jobs Created:	1,145
2013 Jobs Retained:	997 (vast majority were a result of the SpartanNash project)
New Jobs Created:	1,586
2014 Jobs Retained:	45
New Jobs Created:	2,138

"This is great news, considering that 95 percent of county economies have not returned to their pre-recession unemployment rates," says Dan Koorndyk, Chair of the Kent County Board of Commissioners. "We need to remain focused on policies that will encourage new business growth in all sectors."

The **2014 County Economic Tracker: Progress through Adversity** tracks annual changes in four key economic performance indicators — economic output (GDP), employment, unemployment and home prices — across the nation's 3,069 county economies. The new analysis also explores 2012-2013 wage dynamics, accounting for local cost of living and inflation. The data demonstrates that county economies are where Americans feel the national economy, particularly in their jobs and paychecks.

According to a release from NACo, almost three-quarters of county economies recovered to pre-recession levels on at least one of the indicators. Most of the fully-recovered county economies are small, in counties with fewer than 50,000 people. The report also found the median housing price for a single family home has recovered close to 2005 prices, the peak year for Kent County.

For the report and individual county economic performance profiles, visit www.naco.org/CountyEconomies.