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**COUNTY EXECUTIVE TEACHES KIDS ABOUT TICKS IN DR. SEUSS LIKE FASHION
Spano reads children's book that the county is donating to schools and libraries to local students**

Watch your backs Jay-Z and Kanye because you've got some stiff competition. County Executive Andy Spano threw down some fierce rhymes while reading aloud the children's book "Lyme in Rhyme" today at Brookside Elementary School in Ossining to kick off Lyme Disease Awareness Month.

Spano, who was infected by and recovered from the tick-borne illness ehrlichiosis several years ago, was all smiles as he previewed the book in the school's outdoor classroom in the woods. Spano engaged a class of second graders by reciting lines like "The longer the tick is allowed to dine, the greater the chance of developing Lyme."

"Lyme Disease and other tick-borne illnesses are still a problem in Westchester, especially in the northern part of the county," Spano said. "The sooner you teach kids how to keep ticks away, the better. This way, what they learn becomes a routine part of their regular outdoor activities and they are less likely to get bitten by a tick."

To help educate Westchester's kids about diseases spread by ticks and how to avoid them, the County bought 200 copies of "Lyme in Rhyme" through a state grant and has provided one to each public elementary school and public library in Westchester.

Following the County Executive's reading, Christine Falco, an Animal Vector Specialist from the County Health Department, gave a show and tell demonstration of how to dress for the great outdoors and how to do a thorough tick check. The children also saw what real ticks look like through a portable Lucite viewing display that Falco brought along.

MORE

Lyme disease is the most common tick-borne illness reported in Westchester County. An average of 428 residents tested positive for the illness during the past six years, from 2003 through 2008. It is spread through the bite of an infected deer tick and is usually identified by an expanding red bull's-eye rash. The rash can appear three to 30 days after the bite and can last for several weeks. Other symptoms can include fever, sore throat, fatigue, sleeping difficulties, joint and muscle pain, swollen glands and dizziness.

Two other tick-borne diseases, ehrlichiosis and babesiosis, are also seen occasionally in our area. Symptoms of these two diseases can include fever, chills and muscle aches. Infection with any or all three tick-borne illnesses can occur in the same person at the same time.

Ticks are most often found in grassy or wooded areas. They do not jump or fly. They stay low to the ground and grab onto animals and humans that brush up against them. Ticks are very tiny and difficult to see. They range from the size of a poppy seed to an apple seed.

Avoiding tick bites is the best defense against tick-borne diseases. To protect yourself and your family, the Health Department recommends:

- Doing tick checks each and every time you and your family return home from enjoying outdoor activities. Inspect the entire body and remove ticks promptly. Ticks usually have to be attached and feed for at least 36 hours before transmitting disease.
- Avoiding tick-infested areas (wooded or grassy spots), especially in May, June and July when deer ticks that can spread disease are most active.
- Wearing light-colored, tightly-woven clothes to spot ticks more easily.
- Tucking your pants into socks and your shirt into your pants to create a barrier against ticks.
- Using insect repellents containing DEET, sparingly and with care, according to the manufacturer's directions. Be advised that these products are not recommended for use on children under 2 months old. It is also important that skin treated with DEET products be washed with soap and water after tick exposure has ended.
- Using landscaping measures around your home to make your property less attractive to deer and ticks. Keep your grass cut short; remove leaf litter and debris, and plant shrubs and flowers that deer do not like to eat.

For more information about Lyme disease, residents can call the County's Tick-borne Disease Information Line at (914) 813-LYME or visit the Health Department website at www.westchestergov.com/health.