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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**KNOW BEFORE YOU GO: WESTCHESTER COUNTY'S SNEEZE ALERT
PUTS POLLEN COUNT WARNINGS RIGHT INTO YOUR INBOX**

With the thermometer bouncing up and down like a yo-yo, many Westchester County residents are understandably confused about what season we are in. But for at least 20% of the population, it will soon become painfully clear what the season is – allergy season!

As many as 35 million Americans suffer seasonal allergies in the spring and fall as a result of airborne pollen and mold spores, which can cause itchy eyes, runny noses and sneezing fits.

“Allergy season usually begins around the end of March or early April in our area,” said Joshua Lipsman, M.D., M.P.H., Commissioner of Health for Westchester County. “But there are indications that it may be off to an early start this year.”

With the *Associated Press* reporting pollen counts in Memphis, Tennessee four times higher than normal for this time of year, some people are wondering if the season might turn out worse than usual. To help make the lives of allergy sufferers a little more bearable, Westchester County is offering an email pollen count alert service, called “Sneeze Alert.” By registering for the Sneeze Alert, residents can receive regular free updates by email notifying them of the severity of pollen and mold counts in the area.

The alerts are based on data collected at the Armonk-based Louis Calder Center of Fordham University and provided through the National Allergy Bureau of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology. For simplicity sake, pollen and mold levels are described as *absent*, *low*, *moderate*, *high* or *very high*. Subscribers are alerted each time there is an update made on pollen and mold counts, which may be as

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often as once a day during the height of allergy season. Until recently, only medical professionals and media centers received such reports.

To sign up for the Sneeze Alert, simply visit the Westchester County website at www.westchestergov.com and click on Subscribe. By providing an email address, residents can sign up for free email updates on Sneeze Alerts as well as a variety of other topics:

- General County News
- Consumer information
- Health
- Parks & Recreation
- Senior Services
- Environmental / Conservation
- Public Safety and Emergency Information
- Transportation
- Teen News

“Registering for the Sneeze Alert may be the best advice I can give to help seasonal allergy sufferers manage their exposure to allergens a little better,” said Dr. Lipsman. “At least they will know how bad it is out there before deciding whether to venture out.”

Dr. Lipsman adds the following advice for seasonal allergy sufferers:

- As much as possible, avoid going outdoors when pollen counts are high, or on windy days.
- Use air conditioning to stay cool and keep windows in your home and car closed.
- Don’t mow the lawn – let a non-allergic person do it.
- After being outdoors, take off your shoes and change clothes since pollen may cling to them. Take a shower to remove pollen from your hair.

For more information please contact the Westchester County Health Department at (914) 813-5000 or visit our website at www.westchestergov.com/health.