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MOSQUITO CONTROL EFFORTS NECESSARY FOR SUMMER MONTHS

With August approaching, Westchester County is urging residents to remain vigilant in the effort to reduce the risk of West Nile virus by eliminating sources of standing water around their homes and businesses. Standing water is a potential breeding ground for mosquitoes that carry the virus.

County Executive Andy Spano said, "Our mosquito-control program relies on the help of everyone to not only take personal precautions – such as using mosquito repellent when outdoors in areas with many mosquitoes – but to keep their property clear of water that might attract mosquitoes. This is particularly important now during mid to late summer when mosquitoes are so rampant."

Mosquitoes capable of carrying West Nile virus lay their eggs in stagnant water. The eggs can develop in any pool or puddle of water that stands undisturbed for more than four days. Mosquitoes will breed in any untreated water, so the County Health Department recommends doing the following around your home:

- Rid your property of tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots or similar water-holding containers
- Remove discarded tires
- Drill holes in the bottoms of all recycling containers that are left outdoors
- Turn over plastic wading pools and wheelbarrows when not in use
- Change the water in birdbaths at least twice weekly
- Sweep your driveway after it rains so that it is free of puddles

- Keep storm drains and gutters clear of leaves and debris
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, outdoor spas and hot tubs and drain water that collects on their covers.

Last month, a total of 335 registered volunteers, joined by countless individual residents, banded together in a collaborative effort dubbed “Spring S.T.I.N.G. Weekend” to fight West Nile virus in Westchester County by ridding their communities of potential mosquito breeding grounds.

“Spring S.T.I.N.G. Weekend was a wonderful opportunity for residents to get involved and take pride in their communities and help our fight against West Nile virus,” said Dr. Joshua Lipsman, the county’s Commissioner of Health. “Residents brought over five tons of tires to Westchester Community College for proper disposal. This effort is particularly noteworthy because used tires have become the most common breeding ground for mosquitoes that are known to carry West Nile virus.”

Spring S.T.I.N.G. was a joint effort of the Department of Health, Citizens Campaign for the Environment and 33 community-based organizations. Participating groups distributed nearly 5,000 publicity flyers prior to the event and took to the streets to clean up sources of standing water that could serve as mosquito breeding sites.

Mosquito control activities undertaken by Spring S.T.I.N.G. participants included: getting rid of over 1,000 water-holding containers that were left outdoors, such as cans, bottles, buckets and drums; collecting over 200 bags of garbage and debris; covering or drilling holes in over 100 outdoor trash containers and recycling bins that were capable of collecting rain water; and draining the water from over 900 outdoor flower trays and birdbaths.

Organizations that took part in Spring S.T.I.N.G. Weekend included: The Fleetwood Neighborhood Association of Mount Vernon; The Kingsbridge Garden Association of Mount Vernon; Greyston in Yonkers; The White Plains YWCA; The Westchester Community Opportunities Program; Sierra Club; Hudson Valley Bank; The Child Care Council; The Westchester Children’s Association; The Westchester County Department of Parks and Recreation; as well as numerous Boy and Girl Scout Troops throughout the County. These groups worked in a variety of ways to eliminate mosquito breeding sites in their cities and towns, as well as teamed up to perform a substantial clean-up effort along the Hutchinson River Parkway from Mt. Vernon to Pelham.

For additional information about West Nile virus control and prevention, call the Health Department’s West Nile Virus Information Line at (914) 813-5609, or visit www.westchestergov.com/health.