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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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YOUTH HOLD “STEP AWAY FROM TOBACCO” STEP TOURNAMENT AND DANCE

On Saturday, December 1, 2001, the Westchester County Reality Check program will sponsor “Step Away From Tobacco” a step dance tournament and follow-up dance at the Dole Center in Mount Vernon (Corner of West 4th Street and South 6th Avenue).

Step dance teams from Port Chester, Peekskill, Ossining, White Plains, Lakeland, Yonkers and Mamaroneck will be participating in the tournament. Prizes will be awarded for “Best Step Team” and “Best Team Spirit.” Following the step dance tournament, a dance will be held featuring a live DJ who will spin a mix of hip-hop, reggae and R&B music, as well as food and giveaways. Admission to this event is free with a High School ID.

“Tobacco companies spend roughly \$8 billion per year marketing their product to our youth,” said Joshua Lipsman, M.D, M.P.H., Commissioner of Health for Westchester County. “Despite being banned from using broadcast media to advertise, Big Tobacco has found many alternative ways to invade children’s lives. Through the sponsorship of sporting and entertainment events, outdoor and indoor billboard ads, and abundant giveaway items, the tobacco industry is still actively trying to lure children into a dangerous habit that carries grave consequences,” continued Dr. Lipsman. “The teenagers who are involved in the Reality Check program and who attend events like “Step Away From Tobacco” are to be commended for their effort to educate their peers about the harmful influence of Big Tobacco,” he added.

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“We’re sick of cigarette makers trying to lure us into the smoking trap with all their advertisements and free merchandise,” said Chris Hopper, a Mount Vernon High School Sophomore and “Step Away From Tobacco” event coordinator. “Big Tobacco has been targeting youth far too long. That’s why we’re holding this event, to send cigarette-makers a clear and concise message that if they think they can continue to market their deadly product to New York Teens, they are in for a reality check!”

Reality Check is a teen-created and teen-directed statewide organization, administered locally through the Westchester County Department of Health, dedicated to empowering and educating their peers about tobacco advertising practices.

For more information on the “Step Away From Tobacco” event or the Reality Check movement call Jim Miller of the Westchester County Department of Health at 914-813-5234.