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COUNTY EXECUTIVE CHALLENGES KIDS TO JUNK FOOD-FREE WEEK
Encourages schools to participate in No Junk Food Week as part of National Nutrition Month

Westchester County Executive Andy Spano is challenging school kids across the county to say goodbye to potato chips, candy, French fries and other “Junk Foods” – at least for a week in March.

No Junk Food week is part of Spano’s overall Fit Kids Program to fight childhood obesity and related illnesses. **No Junk Food Week** is an effort to get students to pledge to give up junk food for one week in March. This is the third year that the Westchester County Health Department has run the competition during the month of March, which is national nutrition month.

“I am very concerned about childhood obesity,” said Spano. “This is one aspect of our overall campaign to get kids and parents to change their eating habits. We know it is hard. But it is important to the health of our kids now and when they are adults. Every year more schools come on board and they are doing some very creative things to educate children on how to make healthy choices.”

Schools across Westchester are asking their students to sign a pledge, promising to eat only healthy snacks for one week. Prizes provided by the county will be raffled off to those who sign up and the school with the most participants will be presented with a certificate from the county executive and the health commissioner. Last year’s winner was the Benjamin Franklin Elementary School in Shrub Oak. Six hundred and forty students or 67 percent of the student body took the pledge.

Sixty-four schools representing 30 school districts have participated in Fit Kids activities since the program was established by Spano in 2003.

Westchester County Health Commissioner Dr. Joshua Lipsman said that Fit Kids was developed by the Health Department because of the growing concern in the health community about obesity.

(MORE)

Pg. 2- No Junk Food Week

“Many health problems are associated with overweight and obesity,” stated Westchester County Health Commissioner Dr. Joshua Lipsman. “These include an increased risk of diabetes and cardiovascular diseases, such as high blood pressure, stroke and heart disease. National Nutrition Month is the perfect time to start making healthier lifestyle choices to prevent these health problems.”

Schools interested in participating in No Junk Food Week can download all materials for the program by visiting www.westchestergov.com/fitness or www.westchestergov.com/health.

“Junk food” is a slang term for foods high in sugar, fat, and salt that usually do not provide protein, vitamins, minerals and other important nutrients. The term “empty calories” is often used in connection with junk food and reflects the lack of nutrients. To help make smart snack food choices, follow these tips:

- Many snack foods may be categorized as junk food. Judge each food based on the list of ingredients and the package’s Nutrition Facts label.
- Look to see if sugar, fat or salt is listed as one of the first three ingredients. If so, the food probably is too high in sugar, fat or salt.
- Be aware of the serving size listed on the package label. If your serving is larger than the serving size noted, you then will be taking in larger quantities of calories, sugar, fat and salt than is listed on the package label.
- 300 calories per serving or less is generally considered acceptable for a snack.
- Look at the fat content. Healthy snack items contain a maximum of three grams of total fat per serving.
- Foods with five grams of fiber or more are considered high fiber foods. Snacks with more than two grams of fiber per serving are desirable.
- Limit carbohydrates in snacks to 30 grams or less per serving. Fruit in any form is healthy, regardless of the carbohydrate content.

More information on reading a nutritional label and choosing healthy food options can be found on the Health Department’s website www.westchestergov.com/health.

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