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**COUNTY RAMPS UP EFFORTS TO PREVENT TOBACCO USE
Adolescent Tobacco Use Prevention Act (ATUPA) funding increased by over \$100,000
County Launches Quit Smoking Blog**

Westchester County efforts to prevent teen tobacco use and to help smokers kick the habit have been kicked up a notch. Over \$100,000 in new state funds will enable Health Department staff to crackdown on businesses that violate the state Adolescent Tobacco Use Prevention Act (ATUPA) and a new “quit smoking blog” is up and running on the Health Department website to help smokers quit the habit.

“Enforcement of the Adolescent Tobacco Use Prevention Act sends a strong message to merchants that Westchester County will not tolerate selling cigarettes to minors,” stated County Executive Andy Spano. “The website is designed to help residents quit smoking by offering real-life stories from those trying to quit,” he noted.

ATUPA Enforcement:

The increase in funding will allow the Health Department to expand ATUPA enforcement operation, further preventing cigarettes from ending up in the hands of minors. This is important since most smokers start smoking before the age of 18.

The Westchester County Department of Health conducts ATUPA enforcement checks at establishments throughout the county. “Sting teams” visit delicatessens, stationery stores, tobacco stores, supermarkets, pharmacies, gas stations, grocery stores, variety stores and bars.

The sting operation works like this: a minor, working undercover for the Department of Health, attempts to buy a tobacco product from a merchant's establishment. Once the minor leaves the establishment, the

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inspector who witnessed the transaction will either issue a citation to the vendor for selling tobacco to the minor or congratulate the vendor for not selling it.

Westchester County conducts over 3500 stings a year and has a compliance rate of 96%. The additional funding will enable the Health Department to increase enforcement activities on nights and weekends, including additional unannounced evening inspections of bars and restaurants.

QuitSmokingBlog

Quitting smoking is hard enough on your own. It often takes smokers many attempts before successfully quitting. Now Westchester County is here to let residents know that they are not in this alone. Residents can log on to the County's new quit smoking blog at www.westchestergov.com/health/TobaccoBlog.htm and share their stories.

"Maybe you're trying to quit smoking or just thinking about quitting. Or maybe you've quit and have some helpful tips to share. Log on and create your own blog or just read what others are going through," commented Westchester County Health Commissioner Dr. Joshua Lipsman.

"Tobacco use remains the leading preventable cause of death in the United States, causing nearly 440,000 deaths each year," he continued. "Our new quit smoking blog offers residents another way to help kick this deadly addiction."

Dr. Lipsman has kicked off the quit smoking blog with an entry of his own. To create a blog or read others' blogs, log on to www.westchestergov.com/health/TobaccoBlog.htm According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2004, 44.5 million adults in the United States were current smokers. An estimated 70 percent of these smokers said they wanted to quit.

Nationally, smoking results in more than 5.5 million years of potential life lost each year. Smoking harms nearly every organ of the body. Quitting smoking has immediate as well as long-term benefits, reducing risks for diseases caused by smoking and improving health in general. Smoking cigarettes with lower levels of tar and nicotine provides no clear benefit to health. The list of diseases caused by smoking includes bladder, esophageal, laryngeal, stomach, lung, oral, cervical, kidney, pancreatic and throat cancers, pneumonia, periodontitis, chronic lung diseases, cataract, coronary heart and cardiovascular diseases, as well as reproductive effects and sudden infant death syndrome.

For more information on tobacco use prevention, visit the Health Department's website at www.westchestergov.com/health.