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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 4, 2007

**HEALTH DEPARTMENT WORLD AIDS DAY CONFERENCE TO
MOBILIZE COMMUNITY LEADERS**

In observance of World AIDS Day 2007, the Westchester County Department of Health will be presenting its annual conference on Thursday, December 13th at Manhattanville College in Purchase. The conference, entitled “Mobilizing Community Leadership to Address HIV and AIDS in Westchester County”, is cosponsored by the Westchester County AIDS Council.

The program will begin at 8:30 a.m. with registration and a continental breakfast and will end with lunch at 12:00 p.m. Welcoming remarks will be offered by Dr. Joshua Lipsman, Commissioner of Health for Westchester County, and by Wilfredo Morel, Chair of the Westchester County AIDS Council. Dr. Pernessa C. Seele, founder and CEO of The Balm in Gilead, Inc., will deliver the keynote address. Dr. Seele is a nationally renowned leader in HIV prevention initiatives and her organization has mobilized the Black Church Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS for almost 20 years.

Following a recess, breakout sessions will occur during which attendees will hear from panelists who have demonstrated leadership in HIV prevention and will strategize on how to engage community stakeholders to become leaders themselves in addressing HIV in their own communities. There is no cost to attend the conference but registration is required by December 7th. For more information, please contact Yedidah Yehudah at yay1@westchestergov.com.

“HIV and AIDS remain significant public health issues in Westchester County,” said Commissioner Lipsman. “On average, a new case of HIV infection is diagnosed in Westchester about every three days. Of all the counties in New York State outside of New York City, Westchester has the greatest number of people living with HIV and AIDS.”

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Approximately 52 percent of HIV and AIDS cases in Westchester are among Blacks and 24 percent among Hispanics. Injection drug use accounts for about 40 percent of living cases but the number of those infected through heterosexual transmission is increasing and now accounts for 25 percent of county residents with HIV and AIDS.

World AIDS Day was established by the World Health Organization on December 1st, 1988 to address the growing pandemic that has now claimed millions of lives. Throughout the world, there are estimated to be more than 33 million people now infected with HIV, including more than two million children. In the United States, an estimated 1.2 million people are living with AIDS and HIV. As many as one in four of those infected with HIV in the U.S. is unaware that he or she is infected.

Information on many other events being held in Westchester and New York City to recognize World AIDS Day can be found on the Westchester County Health Department's website at www.westchestergov.com/health.

For more information or to register for the Westchester County World Aids Day Conference, please contact the Westchester County Department of Health at (914) 813-5266 or email yay1@westchestergov.com.