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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**DO YOUR BODY A FAVOR:
JOIN THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE'S NO JUNK FOOD WEEK**

Westchester County Executive Andy Spano is challenging school kids (and everyone else) to say goodbye to potato chips, candy, French fries and other "Junk Foods" – at least for a week. No Junk Food Week, which is a component of Spano's Fit Kids Program, is an effort to get students to pledge to give up junk food and eat only healthy snacks for one week in March.

"Childhood obesity is a serious concern," said Spano. "The No Junk Food Week is one aspect of our overall campaign to encourage kids and parents to make healthy dietary choices. Our hope is that children can begin to develop a consciousness of the value of healthy eating that will benefit them throughout their lives."

Schools across Westchester are inviting their students to sign the No Junk Food Week pledge. Prizes provided by the County will be raffled off to those who participate and the school with the highest percentage of participating students will be presented with a certificate from the County Executive and the County Health Commissioner.

No Junk Food Week has been promoted County-wide since 2004. Last year, 35 schools and approximately 17,000 students participated. Benjamin Franklin Elementary School in Shrub Oak was recognized for having the highest level of participation, with 434 students, or 69 percent of the student body, participating.

This year's No Junk Food Week is set to be the most exciting ever, with a record number of schools and students participating. In January, the County mailed information about No Junk Food Week to 150 elementary school principals and 150 elementary school nurses in Westchester. To date, 42 schools and almost 25,000 students have indicated they will participate.

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Many schools have planned week-long, or even month-long, activities to promote healthy eating and physical activity, such as:

- Springhurst Elementary School in Dobbs Ferry will incorporate No Junk Food Week into a “Fit Kids Month.” The month will include a screening of the educational version of the movie *Super Size Me* for all Dobbs Ferry students. Springhurst students will participate in Walk Across America and will be able to taste new healthy snack options in the cafeteria on “Tasty Tuesdays.”

- All eleven of New Rochelle City School District schools are participating in No Junk Food Week with a number of activities. Free nutritious breakfasts will be served to elementary school students. A guide was developed for elementary school teachers with suggested daily activities and lesson plans to promote wellness. PTA and school newsletters will highlight No Junk Food Week.

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

“Junk food” usually refers to foods high in sugar, fat, and salt that usually do not provide protein, vitamins, minerals and other important nutrients. To help make smart snack food choices, the Health Department is offering these tips:

- Judge each food based on the list of ingredients and the package’s Nutrition Facts label.
- If sugar, fat or salt are listed among the first three ingredients, the food probably is too high in sugar, fat or salt to be healthy.
- Be aware of the serving size listed on the package label. If your serving is larger than the serving size noted, you will be getting more calories, sugar, fat and salt.
- A healthy snack would usually not contain more than 300 calories per serving.
- Healthy snack items contain a maximum of seven grams of total fat and two grams of saturated fat per serving. Avoid snacks that contain trans-fats.
- Limit sugar in snacks to 15 grams or less per serving. Fruit in any form is healthy, regardless of the sugar content.
- Beverages that are high in sugar should be avoided. Water, nonfat or lowfat (1%) milk and 100% fruit juice are good choices.

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The County’s Fit Kids Campaign was developed in response to the growing concern about childhood obesity. Ninety-four schools representing 33 school districts have participated in Fit Kids activities since the program was established by County Executive Spano in 2003.

“Many health problems are associated with overweight and obesity,” said Dr. Joshua Lipsman, Westchester County Health Commissioner. “These include an increased risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes. A healthy diet plays an important role in preventing these diseases and improving the quality of life. We hope that adults and children alike will take advantage of No Junk Food Week to discover that good food actually tastes better than junk food and make some permanent changes to eating habits.”

For more information call the Westchester County Department of Health at (914) 813-5000 or visit the Department’s website at www.westchestergov.com/health.