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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FIRST WESTCHESTER FLU CASE CONFIRMED Health Department Urges Residents to Get Vaccinated

The Westchester County Department of Health has identified the first laboratory-confirmed case of flu in Westchester. The flu sufferer was a 36-year-old man who was treated at an area hospital on December 10 and released that day. Prior to coming to the hospital, he had endured four days of fever, body aches, headaches, a sore throat, vomiting and respiratory difficulty – all typical flu symptoms.

“I urge residents to consult their primary care physicians or a neighborhood health clinic about getting a flu shot for themselves and members of their families,” said Dr. Joshua Lipsman, Westchester County Commissioner of Health. “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, and since flu season doesn’t peak until February or later in most years, getting the flu vaccine now is well worth it. Your best bet to avoiding flu misery this season is to get vaccinated as soon as possible, especially since antiviral medications are of limited effectiveness.”

Lipsman noted that this year’s flu shot closely matches circulating flu strains, and that those strains have begun to show resistance to common antiviral medications.

The flu vaccine is recommended for all residents over age 50, pregnant women ages 18 and older, people who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities, children ages six months and up to age 19; those who are 18 years of age and older with chronic heart or lung conditions, diabetes, or compromised immune systems; and caregivers (including healthcare workers) of high-risk patients.

In the past week, the Westchester County Department of Health has distributed nearly 1,500 free flu doses to the Hudson River Healthcare in Peekskill, Sound Shore Medical Center in New Rochelle and St. John’s Riverside Hospital in Yonkers. The county also vaccinated 3,600 residents at county clinics throughout Westchester in October and November.

Each year in the U.S., more than 200,000 people are hospitalized and 36,000 die from the flu.

Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze, Dr. Lipsman said. If you do get the flu, stay home to avoid spreading your germs to others. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and promptly dispose of it.

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