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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**WESTCHESTER COUNTY CELEBRATES GREAT AMERICAN SMOKEOUT  
NOVEMBER 21, 2002**

As part of its dedicated efforts to prevent tobacco use, Westchester County will join the American Cancer Society on November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2002 in celebrating the Great American Smokeout. Anti-tobacco events will be held throughout the county. The Great American Smokeout is a popular nationally recognized event that encourages smokers to give up cigarettes for 24 hours.

Westchester County Executive Andy Spano encourages all smokers to participate, saying that, "The Great American Smokeout is a good starting point for smokers who want to quit. It allows smokers to prove to themselves that they can stop smoking for at least 24 hours. Even one nonsmoking day is a break for your heart and lungs."

"I know firsthand about the dangers of smoking," Spano continued. "Quitting smoking is one of the greatest things I ever did for my health.

The first step to giving up cigarettes is a genuine desire to quit. Start by listing reasons for not smoking and set a date to have your last cigarette. Bolster your willpower by reading facts about smoking. Next, choose a smoking cessation program that you are likely to stick with. Although many smokers quit "cold turkey," heavy smokers are more likely to achieve their goal by joining a structured program.

The Westchester County Department of Health recommends the following techniques for quitting:

- When you feel like having a cigarette, delay lighting up. Let the urge subside.

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- Cut back on the amount of coffee and alcohol that you drink. For many smokers, these beverages trigger an urge for a cigarette.
- Get rid of your cigarette lighters and ashtrays.
- Find a friend to quit with you and offer each other moral support.

While quitting, a smoker may experience coughing, dizziness, insomnia, irritability, fatigue, lack of concentration and depression. These symptoms are to be expected and will pass in a short time.

“Tobacco use remains the leading preventable cause of death in the United States,” stated Westchester County Health Commissioner Joshua Lipsman, MD, MPH. “Each year tobacco use kills over 430,000 Americans. The Great American Smokeout is a great time to educate children and teenagers to understand why they should never start using tobacco.”

Through funding from County Executive Spano’s BUTT OUT Westchester campaign , community based organizations will be participating in Great American Smokeout activities:

- Urban League of Westchester will be holding tobacco prevention activities at the Graham Elementary School in Mt. Vernon, including displaying anti-smoking posters created by the students.
- Mt. Vernon Neighborhood Health Center will be hosting an informational booth and encouraging people to put their cigarettes in a “drop-off” barrel.
- Pace University Health Services in Pleasantville and St. John’s Hospital in Yonkers will be offering free smoking cessation programs.
- St. Joseph’s Medical Center in Yonkers held a smoking cessation and prevention information session last Friday
- To prevent teenage girls from smoking, a Westchester County Face Value tent will be promoting the Great American Smokeout at Fox Lane High School in Bedford.

For additional information on free smoking cessation programs call the Westchester County Department of Health at (914) 813-5266 or visit the Westchester County Department of Health website at [www.westchestergov.com](http://www.westchestergov.com).