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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Health District Offers Free Program for Asthma Sufferers**

Asthma sufferers might take comfort in the knowledge that an estimated 25.9 million people (8% of adults, 10% of children) have asthma. Allergic diseases are the fifth leading cause of chronic disease in this country and the third leading cause of chronic disease in children under the age of 18. According to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, asthma is the leading chronic disease among children and is the leading reason for missed school days. It accounts for almost 2 million emergency room visits each year, with nearly 8 million doctors' visits and nearly 500,000 hospitalizations.

Asthma is characterized by inflammation of the air passages, resulting in the temporary narrowing of the airways that transport air from the nose and mouth to the lungs. Symptoms of asthma can include wheezing, coughing, shortness of breath, and tightness in the chest. These symptoms can be caused by allergens or irritants that are inhaled into the lungs, resulting in inflamed, clogged or constricted airways.

Asthma attacks can be brought on by a variety of triggers – these can include allergens, infection, chemicals, cold air, exercise, stress, and other factors. People who have asthma have inflamed airways, which make the airways swollen and sensitive. When the airways react, the muscles around them tighten, making them narrower and causes less air flow to the lungs.

While there is no cure for asthma, needless suffering can be avoided by getting the appropriate medical attention and using treatment medications properly and consistently. Anyone who experiences a severe bout with allergies or asthma should contact a physician immediately for treatment.

To combat the fight against asthma, the Central Connecticut Health District is conducting a program called "Putting on AIRS" that is funded by a grant from the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH). This program is designed to target the reduction of environmental asthma triggers in the home. It is available to all participating town residents, including the towns of Berlin, Newington, Rocky Hill and Wethersfield, who suffer from asthma and/or have a child who suffers from asthma at NO cost to the resident. The following services will be provided during the home visit: the Asthma Educator reviews the medical provider's asthma plan and medications with the client. The client will be provided with additional education to help understand how to better manage their asthma. The environmental specialist will walk through the home to help identify causes of asthma and will show the client how to minimize the asthma triggers in the home. A confidential report will be developed as part of the child or adult's medical record to help control asthma. To refer a diagnosed asthma patient to this program, please contact Betty Murphy at (860) 665-8571.