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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UNLV, CCSD REVIVE POLLEN COUNT PROGRAM TO HELP ALLERGY SUFFERERS KNOW WHAT'S IN THE AIR

As spring gets off to an early start, UNLV and CCSD program monitors allergen counts

LAS VEGAS – February 23, 2015 – Clark County residents now have a better idea of what's causing their stuffy noses, sneezing and wheezing this allergy season. UNLV and the Clark County School District (CCSD) have revived a monitoring program to track when and how much pollen is in Southern Nevada's air. The partnership includes the Clark County Department of Air Quality.

"CCSD is very excited to be a part of this collaborative project," said Mary Pike, CCSD director of science, health and physical education. "Not only will Southern Nevadans benefit from being aware of the concentration of airborne pollen on a day-to-day basis, but we will also be able to provide a variety of educational opportunities for our CCSD students."

At UNLV, pollen counts are collected daily atop White Hall, and a control sample is collected once a week in the town of Jean, Nev. In addition to the current pollen monitoring site at UNLV, stations will be set up at Clark County schools including Joseph M. Neal Elementary School, Jerome D. Mack Middle School, J.D. Smith Middle School and Palo Verde High School.

UNLV researchers collect a slide daily and hand count the pollen under a microscope. The goal is to post the pollen counts from UNLV online each day before noon on the American Academy of Allergy Asthma & Immunology website. The daily count is also available via a link on ccsd.net under the *Community – Additional Resources* tab, which makes it easily accessible for the public and to local news and weather stations.

Pollen count programs are provided nationwide but Las Vegas has been one of the only metropolitan areas without this system.

"Las Vegas has many non-native invasive species because they don't require a lot of water. At the same time, these non-native species are allergy and asthma triggers," said Dennis Bazylinkski, UNLV life sciences professor. "It's important to know what

(more)

areas have a high concentration of pollen so individuals know what allergy or asthma triggers exist for themselves or for their children."

For example, Bazylinkski said Mulberry (especially male varieties often spotted in Las Vegas) is a notorious pollen producer and new planting was banned in Clark County in 1991.

"The pollen count program can track how the allergen's presence in Las Vegas has changed over the years and inform policy decisions," Bazylinski said.

The pollen count program was a function of Clark County but stalled due to budget cuts in 2010. The revived program is now funded through CCSD. Clark County, UNLV, and CCSD each have different responsibilities that work together to provide the county with invaluable information. The County Department of Air Quality is tasked with providing power to the six stations and UNLV is responsible for collecting and analyzing the pollen data and upkeep of the stations. CCSD provided the land for the stations and its science curriculum experts work with UNLV to provide educational resources for teachers and students regarding the pollen data.

The program is led by Mary Pike from CCSD, Mark Buttner, Fred Jin, and Tanviben Patel from UNLV's School of Community Health Sciences, and Dennis Bazylinkski from UNLV's College of Sciences.

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