



New Jersey Center for Tourette Syndrome
AND ASSOCIATED DISORDERS

*Collaborative Partnerships
for the Tourette Syndrome Community*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Noted TS author/educator Sue Conners to give keynote at Dare To Dream Student Leadership Conference

The first Dare to Dream Student Leadership Conference to target the community of New Jersey high school students living with neurological conditions such as Tourette Syndrome, OCD, ADHD, Asperger's Syndrome and other associated disorders is less than a month away!

Hundreds of Garden State students are expected to descend upon Rutgers University's Busch Campus in Piscataway for the conference, which will take place **Monday, May 21**. The New Jersey Office of Special Education is partnering with the New Jersey Center for Tourette Syndrome & Associated Disorders (NJCTS) to develop this unique opportunity for students in transition to focus on the importance of student self-advocacy and leadership.

The conference will feature presentations from students and adults with neurological disorders who have demonstrated exemplary self-advocacy and leadership skills. Additionally, the conference program includes a variety of concurrent breakout sessions that provide attendees insight into the transition process and skills to cultivate self-advocacy. Students also will participate in peer-led workshops, including goal-setting, self-discovery, student self-advocacy and planning for the future.

The keynote presentation at the conference will be given by Susan Conners, M.Ed., an educator for more than 30 years and author of "The Tourette Syndrome/OCD Checklist: A Practical Resource for Parents and Educators."

Conners, who has TS, is an internationally recognized speaker on Tourette and an authority on educating students with TS. She serves as a go-to source for networks and media outlets in their coverage of TS, and has presented workshops at more than 1,000 schools. An education advocate for children with TS for the past 25 years, Conners also has partnered with NJCTS to deliver webinars such as "Managing Tourette Syndrome in the Classroom," which took place April 11.



*Dare to Dream
Student Leadership*

“I was very excited to be asked to be the keynote speaker at the Dare to Dream Conference,” said Conners, who grew up as one of six children in a town of about 700 people in the Adirondack Mountains in Northern New York State and attended elementary school in a one-room schoolhouse. “Although I exhibited my first symptoms of Tourette Syndrome at age 6, I was not diagnosed until age 36. Living as a child under these circumstances, I had very little except for my dreams and I never ever let go of them.”

Conners eventually established the Tourette Syndrome Association (TSA) of Greater New York State and has served on the National Board of the TSA.

“That little girl from her tiny mountain town could never have imagined where her life would take her, but she always knew that if she did not advocate for herself, become a leader and most importantly have unbounded dreams, she would never have been able to achieve what she did,” Conners said.

Conners and NJCTS Education Outreach Consultant Melissa Fowler, who has worked with the New Jersey Department of Education to help put the conference together, hopes all of the students who attend the Dare To Dream Student Leadership Conference will feel empowered to achieve their dreams and receive the tools to make that happen.

“The conference provides, for those students who might not normally find themselves in the position to be leaders, a leadership role and encourages them to be advocates for themselves and for others,” Fowler said. “In this space they find strength in their voice and build confidence and self esteem, which is at the heart of academic success.”

More information on signing up for the conference is available by calling NJCTS at 908-575-7350 or Bob Haugh of the New Jersey Department of Education at 609-633-6431, or by visiting <http://njcts.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/DareToDreamConference2012.pdf>. Melissa Fowler also may be contacted by e-mailing mfowler@njcts.org.

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