



New Jersey Center for Tourette Syndrome
AND ASSOCIATED DISORDERS

*Collaborative Partnerships
for the Tourette Syndrome Community*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Students attending Dare To Dream Conference will benefit from seeing peers as presenters

*May 21 conference at Rutgers will feature speeches and breakouts led
by high school and college students with TS and associated disorders*

Are you a New Jersey student in grades 6 through 12 who suffers from Tourette Syndrome or associated neurological conditions such as OCD, ADHD or Asperger's Syndrome? Then be sure to save the date of **Monday, May 21**, and get signed up for the first **Dare to Dream Student Leadership Conference** that is specifically geared toward helping students in transition focus on the importance of self-advocacy and leadership.

Hundreds of Garden State middle and high school students are expected to descend upon Rutgers University's Busch Campus in Piscataway for the conference, which is being co-developed by The New Jersey Office of Special Education and the New Jersey Center for Tourette Syndrome & Associated Disorders (NJCTS).

The conference will feature presentations from students and adults with neurological disorders who have demonstrated exemplary self-advocacy and leadership skills; breakout sessions, which will provide attendees insight into the transition process and skills to cultivate self-advocacy; peer-led workshops, including goal-setting, self-discovery, student self-advocacy and planning for the future; and more.

One of the keynote addresses will be titled "Voices of Experience," which will be led by individuals either in college or just out of college who have disabilities. Katie Delaney, a freshman at Montclair State University who has Tourette Syndrome, will be one of the primary speakers during this presentation.

Tourette Syndrome is an often misunderstood, misdiagnosed neurological disorder that affects as many as 1 in 100 children, teenagers and adults.



*Dare to Dream
Student Leadership*

“I am going to be talking about my OCD, Tourette and anxiety, and how one should never put their head down and give up,” said Delaney, who regularly writes for the NJCTS-affiliated blog Teens4TS at www.njcts.org/teens4ts. “Although it can be hard, it is doable. I am going to share my experiences with my disabilities and what it was like growing up with Tourette, as well as recently getting diagnosed with OCD and anxiety. I am going to tell them about being positive and understanding that there is an up – that things will get better.”

There also will be groups presenting at the conference – such as The Junction, a small school of students who are led by Mary Beth Reid. Reid asked her students about the message they each will convey at Dare To Dream, and this is how they responded:

Jason: "Don't give up."

Mike: “Fear is your enemy; focus is your friend.”

Richard: "These are really, really good life lessons, and you are teaching life lessons here, too. Life lessons are things everyone needs to learn."

Derek: "Believe in yourself – or at least try. Don't give up your hopes and dreams."

Eric: "Move further ... you can do it."

NJCTS Education Outreach Coordinator Melissa Fowler, M.A., M.Ed, believes the students who attend this conference will benefit not only from the programs being presented, but from seeing fellow students – who are dealing with the same or similar conditions in their lives – giving the presentations.

"It is widely accepted that learning is not one-size-fits-all. Learning disabilities, or the hurdles students bring to the institution of learning, is much the same," Fowler said. "I feel like in this framework, there's much more of a chance that the student will see him or herself represented in the crowd; will find it easy to relate to the group; and experience a much more fulfilling and whole sense that they belong, that they are not alone and that they have a community and network around them to share with, learn from and contribute to."

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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