



New Jersey Center for Tourette Syndrome  
AND ASSOCIATED DISORDERS

*Collaborative Partnerships  
for the Tourette Syndrome Community*

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## **South Plainfield School District Jeans Day raises more than \$700 for NJ Center for Tourette Syndrome**

*April 5 event was a collaboration between teacher Mary Ann Mieke and eighth-grade TS advocate Tommy Licato, who also held a district-wide “Dare To Be Different” Day on April 10*

SOUTH PLAINFIELD – Tommy Licato has done a lot of advocacy and awareness work around the state on behalf of the New Jersey Center for Tourette Syndrome & Associated Disorders (NJCTS). Now, he’s taking what he’s learned and applying it in his hometown of South Plainfield.

With the help of his eighth-grade teacher, Mary Ann Mieke, Licato, held a successful Jeans Day fundraiser on April 5 to benefit NJCTS’ [NJ Walks For TS at Ramapo College fundraising campaign](#) initiated by Mieke’s daughter, Ramapo college senior AnnaKatharine Mieke. Licato and Mieke’s district-wide efforts yielded \$721, with each participating teacher paying up to \$5 each for the right to wear jeans for the day.

“I think it went great,” said Licato, 13, who is part of NJCTS’ Peer Youth Advocate program in which teenagers give presentations about Tourette Syndrome at schools, hospitals and houses of worship across New Jersey. “Everyone in our district participated, and we raised a lot of money because of it. It made me feel really good, too, that the money is going to something that is really important to me, especially since doing this will help other people with Tourette.”

The South Plainfield Jeans Day fundraiser was the second during the 2012-13 school year to be dedicated to NJCTS. [North Brunswick High School’s Jeans Day](#) in October raised \$535.

The Jeans Day in South Plainfield was one of two activities planned by Licato to highlight Tourette Syndrome awareness. The other was a “Dare To Be Different Day” on April 10, in which students paid \$1 to either do something different – such as wear odd clothing or change the style of the hair – or purchase one of more than 300 teal TS awareness ribbons Licato crafted himself during his spring break. Licato raised a little more than \$100 from that fundraiser.

“The Dare To Be Different Day is important to me because it symbolizes how different people with Tourette feel,” Licato said. “It went great. My school is pretty aware, but I think it helped them understand what it is like to have Tourette and be different. It was fun while raising money for a good cause.”

Miehe, whose daughter also helped NJCTS plan and execute the NJ Walks For TS at Ramapo College on April 14 for her senior project, couldn't have been more proud of the effort Licato put in to pull off these awareness and fundraising events – especially since she is a special education teacher and a mother of an adult son affected by Tourette.

“TS has impacted my life for many years,” Miehe said. “I am inspired by the many individuals, including my son, who have enriched my life in a way that can only have occurred because of their daily struggles and triumphs. Advocating for TS in this way supports educational programs that dispel myths and provides much needed information to the general public.”

Tourette Syndrome is a misunderstood, misdiagnosed, inherited neurological disorder characterized by vocal sounds or motor movements known as tics. It affects 1 in 100 children, teenagers and adults, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

And in the eyes of NJCTS Executive Director Faith W. Rice, advocacy efforts such as these putting on by the South Plainfield School District will have impact on the TS community for many years to come.

“We are truly grateful for the fundraising and awareness efforts of the students and faculty in the South Plainfield School District, and to both Mary Ann Miehe and Tommy Licato for teaming together to support the TS community,” Rice said. “We graciously accept these donations, which will effectively serve the children and families in the New Jersey TS community through our statewide education outreach, peer advocacy and family support initiatives.”

More information about NJCTS is available by calling 908-575-7350 or at [www.njcts.org](http://www.njcts.org).

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*New Jersey Center for Tourette Syndrome and Associated Disorders, Inc.  
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