



NJ Walks for TS Honored by State Legislature

Teen and her dad lead hundreds to stand up in support of Tourette Syndrome

April 10, 2014- Tess Kowalski is not your average 14-year-old.

Aside from her schoolwork and extracurricular activities, she's a Youth Advocate for the New Jersey Center for Tourette Syndrome (NJCTS). She educates peers and medical students through the Center's outreach programs to schools and the NJCTS Patient-Centered Medical Education program at local hospitals. As if that wasn't enough, Tess wanted to do more to bring awareness and support to the neurological disorder she shares with over 20,000 other kids in New Jersey.



Cutting the ribbon at the first NJ Walks for TS at Princeton are (l to r) Assemblyman Daniel Benson, Tess and Paige Kowalski, NJCTS Executive Director Faith W. Rice, Leslie and Tim Kowalski.

"When I went to the first New Jersey Walks for TS event in Mendham, I really thought it was a great idea," said Tess, "After all the talks I do about TS, I wanted to do more and I thought it would be really cool to have a walk in our area."

She recruited her father, Tim, and the duo spent several months soliciting local business sponsors and scouting locations to host an additional 5K walk/run. The father-daughter

advocates worked with NJCTS to bring the NJ Walks for TS to the Princeton area; and on April 6th, they welcomed over 200 to the event at Mercer County Park in West Windsor.

"The expectations we had for the walk were blown away," said Tess, "It was completely amazing."

In addition to hundreds of walkers and volunteers, Assemblywoman Donna Simon (R-16) and Assemblyman Daniel Benson (D-14) attended the walk to show their support. Assemblyman Benson presented a joint legislative resolution signed by Senate President Stephen M. Sweeney and General Assembly Speaker Vincent Prieto stating "the strength and success of the State of New Jersey, the vitality of our communities, and the effectiveness of our American society depend, in great measure, upon organizations exemplified by the New Jersey Center for Tourette Syndrome that unite voluntarily, act together and provide their unique talents to further a cause, to perform a necessary service to support one another and their communities or to relieve others from unavoidable hardship"

A high honor from lawmakers and a noble lesson learned in the process. "People are always willing to help out if they can," said Tim, "I learned not to be timid in asking people to make a contribution or to volunteer because people are willing to give what they can and that makes the job [of putting together a large event] easier."

The Kowalski's weren't alone in drumming support for the walk. The honorary committee for the event included celebrities, world-renowned researchers and bipartisan state leaders:

Tim Howard, starting goalkeeper for the United State Men's National Soccer Team and a member of the NJCTS Board of Directors

Craig Carton, radio host on WFAN Sports Talk Radio and an Honorary Member of the NJCTS Board of Directors

Dr. Jay A. Tischfield, Human Genetics Institute of New Jersey

Dr. Robert King, Yale University Child Study Center and Yale TS/OCD Clinic

Dr. Stuart Green, Overlook Medical Center in Summit

Debra L. Wentz, PhD, Executive Director of the New Jersey Association of Mental Health Agencies

Rebecca Spar, Esq., educational rights attorney for Cole Schotz of Hackensack

NJ Senate President Stephen M. Sweeney (D), representing District 3

NJ Senator Jim Whelan (D), representing District 2

NJ Senator Christopher "Kip" Bateman (R), representing District 16

NJ Senator Joseph M. Kyrillos (R), representing District 13

NJ Senator Linda R. Greenstein (D), representing District 14

NJ Senator Joseph F. Vitale (D), representing District 19
NJ Assemblyman Vincent Mazzeo (D), representing District 2
NJ Assemblyman Troy Singleton (D), representing District 3
NJ Assemblywoman Celeste M. Riley (D), representing District 3
NJ Assemblyman Daniel R. Benson (D), representing District 14
NJ Assemblyman Wayne P. DeAngelo (D), representing District 14
NJ Assemblywoman Bonnie Watson Coleman (D), representing District 15
NJ Assemblyman Jack M. Ciattarelli (R), representing District 16
NJ Assemblywoman Donna M. Simon (R), representing District 16
NJ Assemblyman John S. Wisniewski (D), representing District 19

New Jersey Walks for TS started in 2011 by a teenager in Mendham and raises funds to support the programs and services of NJCTS. Proceeds from the Walk at Princeton will fund the NJCTS Children's Scholarship Program which has supported more than 200 graduating New Jersey high school seniors with Tourette Syndrome and awarded them scholarships on the merits of academic achievement, community involvement and personal accomplishment as an individual living with TS and its associated neurological disorders.

The 5th annual walk in Mendham will take place in November. In the meantime, Tim and Tess will start working again for next year's Princeton-area walk.

"We definitely want to make this an annual event here," said Tess.

And next time, dad Tim says he's impressed with his daughter's eye for events. "I learned to listen to what Tess had to say about things," said Tim, "As a father, it's easy to say 'Okay, is that what you want to do?' but she really had some good ideas- next time I'll be more inclined to listen more intently."

NJ Walks for TS originated as an event for kids, by kids; and Tess Kowalski continues this tradition. For more information about NJ Walks for TS at Princeton, or to learn more about Tourette Syndrome and the services of NJCTS, please visit www.njcts.org or call 908-575-7350.

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*New Jersey Center for Tourette Syndrome & Associated Disorders, Inc.
Collaborative partnerships for the TS community*

