



New Jersey Center for Tourette Syndrome  
AND ASSOCIATED DISORDERS

*Collaborative Partnerships  
for the Tourette Syndrome Community*

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# Teens with Tourette Syndrome Poised to Shape Life-Changing Pilot Program

Tim Howard NJCTS Youth Academy to Launch on Friday at Rutgers University

Somerville, NJ- Twenty three teens are getting ready to make history on August 1<sup>st</sup>. They are the first class of the Tim Howard NJCTS Leadership Academy and with that honor comes the responsibility of steering the program to best serve their peers in the Tourette Syndrome community.

Tourette Syndrome (TS) is a neurological disorder characterized by uncontrollable movements known as tics. The disorder comes with accompanying conditions such as OCD and ADHD.

“Kids with TS suffer higher degrees of bullying and isolation,” said Faith W. Rice, executive director of the New Jersey Center for Tourette Syndrome (NJCTS). “TS is a disruption of typical childhood development and if we can give a leg up on what’s down the road, then we can give them tools for life.”

The pilot three-day intensive program is a collaboration between soccer superstar Tim Howard and Rice. “I’ve observed [youth with TS] for many years who deal with so many physical, emotional and social issues that they’re left with little time to develop life skills or anticipate obstacles to transition...it’s something that’s highlighted in the TS community and this Academy is designed with those needs in mind.”

“Tim [Howard] and I talked about it and he is excited at the prospect and has indicated he would have liked something like [the Academy] when he was growing up,” said Rice, “Many parents, kids and professionals in the TS community think we’re right on target with what we’re doing.”

On August 1, the teens who made it through the selection process and who hail from across NJ, NY and PA will arrive at Rutgers University. Each of the 23 have TS and they’ve all demonstrated advocacy skills (for example, the New Jersey teens have worked with NJCTS in the past to deliver TS information to doctors). “We’re looking for these youth to work with us on developing the program,” said Rice, “The Academy s designed with the intention of helping adolescents with TS and associated disorders to become self-leaders and adept at understanding their own strengths, skills and challenges.”

Lectures, workshops and a group project will have students working from morning to night throughout the three-day intensive. The curriculum comes in three parts. The opening workshop is Brian Biology 101 where a TS expert psychiatrist will discuss the parts of the brain that effects behavior and explore where and why tics (the involuntary movements of TS) start. A psychologist will lead a discussion on executive function disorders which effect organization and processing skills among many with TS. Other workshops will empower the teens with necessary skills to manage the social effects of living with a misunderstood and often stigmatized disorder.

Throughout the weekend, participants will work with “coaches”- young adults with TS leading successful lives in a variety of professional fields. The coaches will mentor the participants and prepare them to one day coach younger children facing the same diagnosis. In the meantime, the teens will work together on a group video project.

“The video will be used to recruit future participants, funders and newly diagnosed families who have little kids with TS and need to see light at the end of the tunnel,” said Rice, “We think they have the ability to come together, get excited and work as a team to strategize and give back.” NJCTS is already planning the 2015 academy which is expected to host 40 teens over 4-5 days. To learn more about the Tim Howard NJCTS Leadership Academy, visit [www.njcts.org](http://www.njcts.org) or 908-575-7350.

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