



NEW JERSEY CENTER FOR TOURETTE SYNDROME AND ASSOCIATED DISORDERS, INC.

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SHOUT OUT TO Maddie Pucciarello

NJCTS Volunteer:
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Q: Why is it important to you to volunteer with NJCTS?

A: **Volunteering is a reward within itself. Being able to help raise awareness about Tourettes can do tremendous things for children and their families who are trying to do their best to deal with all of the challenges that come with a diagnosis. I hope that by being an advocate for individuals with TS, I can help families avoid some of the more preventable pitfalls of having TS that I had to deal with growing up.**

Q: What was the biggest challenge you (or your family member) faced growing up with Tourette Syndrome?

A: **Driving has always been my biggest challenge. There were a few years in high school when I couldn't drive for long periods of time (more than 10-15 minutes) in fear that my tics would get me into a car accident. I had issues with excessive blinking and neck jerking. Now, if I have a problem, I know to pull the car over for a few minutes and take a few deep breaths. It's all about cues. The older I get, the better I can judge if I'm going to have a problem with my tics. With age, it gets easier and more manageable.**

Q: What do you do outside of volunteering with NJCTS?

A: **I'm currently a first-year graduate student at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, and I'm studying to get my Masters in Public Health. I also work part-time at Dean's Natural Food Market in Basking Ridge (mostly organic, non-gmo products).**

Q: What is the best advice anyone has ever given you?

A: **Breathe. Whenever I'm stressed, or anxious, or generally having hard time with whatever is always on my plate, taking a moment to relax and asses the situation and really breathe always helps me calm down. Life can be very overwhelming sometimes, and knowing when to care for yourself is key.**

Q: What would your family and friends be surprised to know about you?

A: **I am incredibly passionate about being left-handed. I'm not exactly sure why, but I think it is such a cool thing to be.**

Q: If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be?

A: **Italy! I have never been outside of North America, but my parents recently went to Italy on vacation, and it has become a 24-7 topic of conversation in our family ever since. Apparently, it is amazing. Incredible. Lovely. Delicious food and culture. How could I say no to that?**