



NJ Center for Tourette Syndrome AND ASSOCIATED DISORDERS, INC.

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For Immediate Release

Academy Empowers a New Class of Teen Leaders

NJCTS Tim Howard Leadership Academy Class of 2015 gained new skills for life

Somerville, NJ—The NJCTS Tim Howard Leadership Academy honors a new set of leaders in the Class of 2015. Each of the 35 participants took part in an intensive four-day training promoting self-empowerment, self-leadership, and resilience—all important skills to succeed while living with Tourette Syndrome.

Tourette Syndrome (TS) is a neurological disorder characterized by uncontrollable movements known as tics. As many as 1 in 100 people show signs of TS which is frequently accompanied by other disorders including ADHD, OCD, and learning disabilities.

Created in 2014 in partnership with U.S. Men's Soccer goalkeeper and TS advocate Tim Howard, the Academy is the only leadership program for teens diagnosed with Tourette Syndrome in the nation.

During the opening ceremony,

Howard's inspiring video message welcoming the Class of 2015 encouraged them to "learn as much as you can from the expert team we have assembled and enjoy the time together with others who will guide and inspire you."

Our partners at creative agency BNO introduced The GreaTS movement during opening ceremonies. This powerful movement aims to spread awareness of TS around the world and inspire individuals with TS to come out from behind the shadows, which is also a primary goal of the Leadership Academy. BNO premiered a video about The GreaTS featuring Tim Howard and the room erupted with applause.

The Academy took place at Rutgers University from August 6-9 and emphasized the biological, psychological, and social components surrounding a TS diagnosis. Leading TS experts from area Universities including Rutgers, Yale, and the University of Pennsylvania led presentations and workshops throughout the program. Participants had the opportunity to learn from the neurologists, geneticists, psychologists, and social workers and were able to ask their most burning questions about their diagnoses.



NJCTS Tim Howard Leadership Academy Class of 2015 in their Leadership Academy edition GreaTS shirts



Dr. Jay Tischfield and Dr. Gary Heiman lead a tour through the NJCTS Cell & DNA Sharing Repository

"We want them to leave as experts, ready to face a public who is misinformed about TS," said Leadership Academy Director Melissa Fowler. "They have a unique opportunity to learn more about their diagnosis from our expert presenters."

Each of the 35 participants—who hailed from New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Maryland, Indiana, Washington, Virginia, and California—contributed thoughtful questions and were eager to share life-skills tips with one another. They were assigned to teams led by coaches—successful young adults with TS.

In smaller "Team Talk" sessions, personal, powerful, and emotional discussions continued about the four pillars and developing the goals participants set for themselves as a final project. The coaches were asked about driving, getting accommodations in college, how TS affects them at work, and dating.

"It means so much to teens to engage with coaches and presenters who are the ideal role models," said NJCTS Executive Director Faith W. Rice.

"Learning from others who are living successful lives with a TS diagnosis is invaluable."

Over the course of the Academy, participants spoke of resilience and leadership and defined personal goals for themselves. With the lessons and skills they gained, this class will step up to be the voice of awareness in their own communities.

The 2016 NJCTS Tim Howard Leadership Academy dates will be announced soon. For more information visit www.njcts.org.



The NJCTS Tim Howard Leadership Academy Class of 2015 built friendships to last a lifetime

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*NJ Center for Tourette Syndrome & Associated Disorders, Inc.
Collaborative partnerships for the Tourette Syndrome community*