



New Jersey Center for Tourette Syndrome
AND ASSOCIATED DISORDERS

*Collaborations and Partnerships
for the Tourette Syndrome Community*

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New Jersey family relished opportunity to meet Tourette Syndrome advocate Tim Howard in England

The Kowalskis were the winners of the NJ Center for Tourette Syndrome's Team Up With Tim Howard Raffle, getting to watch the goalkeeper play for Everton of the Premier League

When the Kowalski family signed up for the New Jersey Center for Tourette Syndrome & Associated Disorders' (NJCTS) [Team Up With Tim Howard Raffle](#) last year, their hearts hoped they would win, but their heads told them, "There is no way this will happen."

They should have went with their hearts from the beginning because the Kowalskis – father, Tim; mother, Leslie; and daughters, Tess, 12, and Paige, 8 – were the winners of the nationwide raffle that raised money to support NJCTS programs and outreach services for those with Tourette, a neurological disorder that affects as many as 1 in 100 people.



Photo courtesy of the Kowalski family

Everton goalkeeper Tim Howard, who has Tourette Syndrome, spends time with Tess and Paige Kowalski, who along with their parents, Tim and Leslie, were the winners of the New Jersey Center for Tourette Syndrome's Team Up With Tim Howard Raffle.

Their prize? A chance to see North Brunswick, N.J. native and popular Tourette Syndrome advocate Tim Howard play in England for Everton of the Premier League, regarded by many as the world's most prestigious soccer league.

"As soon as I saw the number (00045), I knew it was us. I was just in shock," Leslie Kowalski said. "We had a pretty rough year with our kids with Tourette. They had the strongest tics we've ever experienced. For my daughter, it was so hard for her to deal with. So it was definitely a welcome pick-me-up."

The Kowalskis watched Howard, a goalkeeper who has Tourette Syndrome and also plays for the U.S. National Team, stand tall in Everton's 2-1 victory over Wolverhampton on Nov. 19, 2011.

The game was great, but getting to meet Howard and have lunch with him and his mother, Esther, was an even bigger thrill.

During the 90-minute lunch, Howard – whom the Kowalskis described as very easy-going – fielded questions from Tess and Paige about life, soccer and TS. The Kowalski girls, who never before had shown any interest in sports and only after winning the raffle said for the first time, “I want to play soccer,” left the lunch even more excited about Howard’s sport. But it was Howard’s stories about growing up with Tourette that captivated the Kowalskis the most.

“He said that when he was a kid, the tics would overwhelm him and they would come out. Now, I get the sense that they just pass through him. It was a different take on ‘You grow out of it,’ ” said Leslie Kowalski, whose girls also were treated to time in the Everton team store and exclusive players’ lounge before the game. “I just loved that my girls were seeing someone who is so free with his tics. He wants to be who he is. He was just so comfortable with himself. I could see by the way they looked at him and talked about him that they were inspired.”

The time with the Kowalskis also was important to Howard, who was diagnosed with TS in middle school, was named the Major League Soccer Humanitarian of the Year in 2001 for his work with Tourette children and has collaborated with NJCTS on several occasions to help advocate for the cause.

“The New Jersey Center for Tourette Syndrome is something that is very close to my heart. I was delighted to meet up with the Kowalski family when they came over to the UK to see our game against Wolves,” Howard said. “I know that they thoroughly enjoyed themselves. It was a terrific experience for them and everyone involved in making this happen should be very proud of themselves.”

But the Kowalskis, who are always on the lookout for ways to help educate others about Tourette Syndrome and recently proudly watched Tess give an in-service presentation about the disorder to a full house at her Princeton-area synagogue, couldn’t have been more proud of Howard and how he represents himself as a pillar of the TS community.

“I think about famous people and how easy it is to lose your grounding. I found that there was not even a shred of that in him,” Leslie Kowalski said. “I noticed it in the little ways. He offered to get us a cab until someone else stepped in and did it for him. How many people in his situation would try to do that little nicety? I really admire that.”

The next step in Tourette advocacy for the Kowalski family is trying to organize a fundraising walk near Princeton in the same vein as NJCTS’ New Jersey Walks For TS event of the past two years in Mendham. For more information about NJCTS’ fundraising events – such as [Tourette Syndrome Awareness Day](#) with the Somerset Patriots on April 29 – programs or educational materials, please call 908-575-7350 or visit www.njcts.org.

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