



Tim Howard and NJCTS to Build “Best Medicine” Through Leadership Academy

The pilot program will launch on August 1st

New Brunswick, NJ- Tim Howard remembers when he was diagnosed with Tourette Syndrome.

"It doesn't seem too long ago, 1989 or 1990- but it was the stone age for all we know about TS today," said Everton and Team USA's goalkeeper. He credits a lot of advances in the field to the New Jersey Center for Tourette Syndrome and Associated Disorders (NJCTS).

"There were absolutely no services or programs for families in New Jersey facing a Tourette diagnosis," said NJCTS Executive Director Faith W. Rice, "No family should have to go through dealing with the complications of TS alone."

On August 1, the soccer star and the innovative nonprofit will team up to launch the Tim Howard NJCTS Leadership Academy at Rutgers University. The three-day intensive program is designed to give teens skills and to successfully navigate life with the neurological disorder.. It fills a need in the TS community that was missing when Howard was growing up in North Brunswick.

"I tried to hide my tics like other kids do, tried to suppress them, not talk and hide them from the conversation," said Howard, "When I spoke up [about it], it was very liberating to me." He says he draws inspiration from kids- like those in the NJCTS Youth Advocate program who speak openly about their challenges in front of their peers and present information about their condition to doctors and teachers..

Both Rice and Howard agreed on the need to empower teens with TS and its accompanying disorders to engage in creative, confidence-building activities to learn the fundamentals of success. "Kids with TS face greater isolation and bullying from their peers, it's important to equip them with the life skills necessary to thrive beyond those tough times," said Rice.

"We don't want the kids to feel alone, [through the Academy] we want them to build upon their own personal strengths and be empowered to advocate for themselves and others," said Howard.

Like many children with TS, Howard recalls the pain of being treated differently by classmates because of his disorder.

"The bullying and ridicule wasn't in my face, but the problem was that I was able to pay attention to when kids whispered or pointed and that was what really hurt," said Howard. As advocates with and for youth with TS to raise awareness, "in their schools there will be no secrets and no whispering."

The pilot program will include 23 students and be hosted at Rutgers University. Instructors include some of the world's leading TS experts. The teens will be coached and mentored by young adult "coaches" with TS. For Tim Howard, it's exactly what the doctor ordered. "It was the boosting of self-esteem that was my medicine," he said, "And it's the best thing we can give to others." For more information about the Academy, visit www.njcts.org or call 908-575-7350.

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