

NJCTS · TIM HOWARD

LEADERSHIP

ACADEMY

About the Program

The NJCTS Tim Howard Leadership Academy is a four-day intensive program for teenagers entering sophomore year through one year post-high school diagnosed with Tourette Syndrome. The Academy provides a positive, respectful, safe, and accepting environment centering on empowerment, self-leadership, advocacy skills, and resilience. Participants receive a toolkit of skills for living life as an individual with Tourette Syndrome allowing them to educate others, be a mentor, an advocate, and a role model.

The Academy was created in collaboration with soccer superstar, TS advocate, and New Jersey native, Tim Howard and in partnership with Rutgers University and the Human Genetics Institute of New Jersey.



Location

The Academy takes place in a new, state-of-the-art facility on Rutgers University's Busch Campus in August. Admission is competitive and space is limited. Participants are divided into groups of approximately 6-8 and are matched with Coaches, who are 20+ years old and experienced in leadership. These "teams" are responsible for establishing team norms, rules, and expectations; they are also resources and supports for each other throughout the experience.



Program

Tourette Syndrome and associated disorders are explored from a biological perspective, a psychological perspective, and a social perspective.

The programs:

- Explain what happens in the brain of an individual with TS
- Explore Executive Functioning Disorder
- Outline the psychological ramifications of, and treatments for, TS
- Provide resources about self-advocacy, transition, and negotiating sociological systems
- Consider the unique social concerns for a person with TS
- Guide participants towards forming healthy social relationships.



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NJCTS

Program (con't)

Presenters include neurologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, and other relevant medical and education professionals. In addition to this, all other activities and sessions are related to the treatment and management of TS and associated disorders, including yoga, meditation, and movement therapies. Attendees may participate in a variety of recreational activities and valuable team-building activities.



A final project is introduced at the start of the weekend and is supported by Coaches, but largely designed by participants. The project is reflective of participants' time at the Academy and will be used as a guideline for carrying the major themes and values of the Academy forward in a way that has practical consequences for participants' lives.



In Their Words

"The academy has helped me realize that my voice and opinion matter and that I shouldn't be afraid to share it. I know that I am strong, resilient, and a self-leader. I've made so many friends who helped to teach me these things as well."

"I understand so much more about the brain and how it works, as well as Tourette's. I acquired new skills that will help me through my life, like organizing myself and how to advocate."

"This was the safest and most accepting place I have ever been in. We got to know each other well enough that we were able to safely and respectfully joke with one another."

"It has given me the confidence that I can be successful and be in relationships and basically do anything! I had never met any adults with TS before, so that was very reassuring for me. It also taught me what others are doing to further awareness and research."

"As a Coach, the Academy was truly a life-changing experience, even for me! It was amazing to see so many bright, talented, young minds in one room. I was inspired by how mature and professional the younger participants were. It is exciting to imagine the bright future these students will have and the impact they will have on NJCTS and the world around them."

"My daughter had an absolutely amazing time meeting new people, making new friends, and gaining a better understanding of TS. We are sharing the information we received from the Academy to resource and guidance at her high school, as well."



The NJ Center for Tourette Syndrome & Associated Disorders, Inc. (NJCTS) is the nation's first Center of Excellence for Tourette Syndrome (TS). Through partnerships and collaborations, NJCTS provides a continuum of services, support and education for families; outreach and training for medical and educational professionals; and advocacy for collaborative research for better treatments and a cure for TS.