

HAWORTH TEEN HELPS PEERS MANAGE LIFE WITH TOURETTE SYNDROME

NJCTS Teen Spokesman Shares Strategies at Family Camp Weekend

June 11, 2009- Just a few weeks shy of turning 15, Dean Roncati is the picture of youth- a young man eagerly awaiting summer break and all the fun that comes with it. But when it comes to interacting with peers, Dean is wise beyond his years.

The Haworth teen has Tourette Syndrome, a neurological disorder characterized by uncontrollable vocal or motor movements known as “tics.” He's the teen spokesperson for the New Jersey Center for Tourette Syndrome and Dean has a sincere mission to help other kids cope with the physical, emotional and social challenges that come with TS.

He has attended the New Jersey Center for Tourette Syndrome's Family Camp Retreat at Camp Bernie since 2005. Sure, it's fun to ride horses and play games, but this year he's the troubleshooter.

“I'm here to talk about how to deal with the pressures of life with TS,” Roncati said.

As if being a teenager isn't hard enough, adolescents with Tourette Syndrome have to cope with being *different*.

“A lot of kids here [at camp] ask me '*How do I tell my friends I have TS*' and I tell them to be honest. You just say '*You may notice I do this and act this way, it's because I have Tourette Syndrome,*” Dean advises, “But make sure you do your research first so you know how to explain what you have.”

His advice to anyone feeling unaccepted is to “tell an adult, make other people know what you're going through.”

During his visit to this year's weekend, June 5-7 in Port Murray, Dean's mentorship extended to children and adults alike. While there are plenty of parents, educators and health professionals on hand, kids and teens take comfort in knowing they're not alone and can trust the advice of someone who has recently been through the stage they're currently in.

“I'm just trying to help kids with their problems with friends, or worries about side effects of medications,” said Dean who encourages all kids with TS to be their own advocates.

Soothing words and wise lessons acquired over just a few short years.

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