

Lexington's Nathan Swirnoff represents Tourette Association as Youth Ambassador in Washington

The Tourette Association of America recently announced this year's Youth Ambassador Program inductees, a group of teens selected to participate in the Association's Ambassador training and 9th annual National Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill from March 8-10. These teens, both with and without Tourette Syndrome (TS) and related Tic Disorders, shared their personal stories with representatives in D.C. and are now returning to their hometowns to raise funds and advocate for public policies and services that promote positive school, work and social environments for individuals affected by the disorder.

Among this year's chosen Youth Ambassadors is Nathan Swirnoff, 14, a Jonas Clarke Middle School 8th grade student, who completed a comprehensive training designed to equip Ambassadors with the tools they need to speak publicly about the often misunderstood disorder. The Ambassadors took part in more than 100 congressional meetings during the Association's National Advocacy Day. Youth Ambassadors from Massachusetts met with legislative aides from the offices of Senator Elizabeth Warren, Senator Ed Markey and Congresswoman Katherine Clark with an encouraging introduction to Senator Warren herself (photo). Although it's estimated that 1 in 100 school-aged children in the United States has TS or a related Tic Disorder, the wide range of symptoms that include both motor and vocal tics can lead to bullying, isolation and life-long learning or emotional issues. After undergoing the Ambassador training and gaining public speaking experience during National Advocacy Day, Nate is now prepared to begin presenting to local schools, clubs and community centers in Lexington to promote understanding and social acceptance of TS and its symptoms.

Nate reflects, "As a Tourette Association Youth Ambassador, I hope to build awareness of TS in my community and help other kids with the condition be understood."

National Advocacy Day is a crucial component of the Tourette Association's Youth Ambassador Program, which empowers youth to improve public speaking skills while spreading awareness and acceptance for TS. Many Youth Ambassadors leverage their training to continue meeting with politicians, appear in the media and assist with fundraising and awareness raising campaigns throughout the year. The Tourette Association launched the Youth Ambassador program in April 2008, and continued it as an annual program due to the first year's success. The program has grown to nearly 250 dedicated teens who have completed more than 1,000 activities including presentations, print and TV media



On March 10, 2016 Nathan Swirnoff of Lexington met with legislative aides from the offices of Senator Elizabeth Warren, Senator Ed Markey and Congresswoman Katherine Clark to advocate for those affected by Tourette Syndrome and Tic Disorders. Pictured here are (left to right): Jenifer Swirnoff, Alexander Swirnoff, Michael Robinson, William Trudell, Nathan Swirnoff, Senator Elizabeth Warren, Brendan Robinson, Victor Oks, Pepper Stone and Camden Alexander.

interviews, and training other Youth Ambassadors to reach more than 5.5 million people through their combined efforts.

"The Association is proud to foster the growth of an ever-expanding network of teens all committed to promoting local and national awareness, advocating for change and educating communities about ways they can support those living with the complexities of Tourette Syndrome and related Tic Disorders," said John Miller, President and CEO, Tourette Association.

About Tourette Syndrome and Tics

Tourette Syndrome is part of a spectrum of hereditary, childhood-onset, neurodevelopmental conditions referred to as Tic Disorders. These conditions affect both children and adults, causing them to make sudden, uncontrollable movements and/or sounds called tics (e.g. head bobbing, arm jerking, shoulder shrugging and grunting). Non-tic features, such as obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and learn-

ing difficulties, often develop in affected individuals. Symptoms in Tic Disorders can range from mild to severe and, in some cases, can be self-injurious, debilitating and markedly reduce quality of life. While some treatments are available for people with TS and other Tic Disorders, approaches to care are inconsistent, medications are often ineffective and there is no cure.

About the Tourette Association of America
Founded in 1972, the Tourette Association of America is dedicated to making life better for all individuals affected by Tourette and Tic Disorders. The premier nationwide organization serving this community, the Association works to raise awareness, advance research and provide on-going support. The Tourette Association directs a network of 32 Chapters and support groups across the country. For more information on Tourette and Tic Disorders, call 1-888-4-TOURET and visit us at tourette.org, and on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.