

For immediate release

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Downtown lights teal for Tourette awareness for second year, spreads statewide

For the second year Pittsburgh's downtown is lighting teal on the first Tuesday of Tourette Syndrome Awareness Month, this year May 21st, as part of the Pennsylvania Tourette Syndrome Alliance's (PATSA) "Wear Teal on Tuesdays" campaign where the organization encourages people to wear teal every Tuesday during the awareness month which runs May 15th through June 15th. This year however, the movement is expanding to six other Pennsylvania municipalities including Greensburg, Johnstown, and Kittanning.

According to the Tourette Association of America, Tourette Syndrome is a tic disorder which involves both physical and verbal tics. Tics are involuntary, repetitive, movements and vocalizations. They are the primary symptoms of a group of childhood-onset neurological conditions known collectively as Tic Disorders.

Sherrie Myers Wivell, the executive director of PATSA says "having the buildings light up in our designated color helps people feel more confident. Often people with Tourette Syndrome feel stared at in public. They hear comments and get mean looks when people notice their tics. Having buildings light up in recognition of a diagnosis offers a positive way to talk about it."

Living with Tourette Syndrome and other tic disorders can be isolating and traumatic for many due to social misunderstandings around these disorders. Tara Lerman has experienced this first hand. Last year Tara, seeing Pittsburgh's skyline in a Tourette Syndrome facebook group, worked to light up the Philadelphia skyline on the last Tuesday of the awareness month. This year Philadelphia will join Pittsburgh on the 21st along with Pottstown and then Harrisburg where the capital will be lit from May 28th through the 30th.

"As someone who was diagnosed with Tourette's as a child, I didn't meet anyone else who had Tourette's until my late 20s." Tara explains, "For so much of my childhood and early adulthood, I felt like I was the only one who had this condition. As a kid, I was made fun of for my tics, kicked out of class for making noises that I couldn't control, and it was a really isolating experience. I now know many people with Tourette's who had similar experiences in school. I still experience instances in public places where people give me strange looks because I am ticking and they clearly don't understand what Tourette's is. I want others who have this condition to know they are not alone and that there are others like them. And I want people who don't have Tourette's to understand what it is and to normalize it. An awareness activation like this building light up is the first step to help us get there."

Through the light up campaign on May 21st that started in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania business owners, county governments, and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are embarking a remarkable undertaking with a coordinated effort in spreading awareness to an often misunderstood disorder by simultaneously lighting up across the commonwealth. Hopefully,

through their generosity and continued efforts future children won't have to deal with the struggles that Tara endured.

"The PA Tourette Syndrome Alliance runs on a shoe-string budget and every dollar that is spent on advertising or outreach is one less that can be spent supporting families," Wivell explains, "We needed something to make a big impact and this volunteer effort does just that! Light Your Town Teal has engaged volunteers from all over and energized them to promote awareness of Tourette Syndrome in a fun way. It takes something that often has a stigma and makes it something of which to be proud."

For more information on Tourette Syndrome and the work of the PA Tourette Syndrome Alliance, visit patsainc.org.

List of buildings and landmarks currently lighting up on May 21st

- Greensburg - Westmoreland County Courthouse
- Johnstown - The Stone Bridge
- Kittanning - Armstrong County Courthouse
- Philadelphia - Boathouse Row
- Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
- Cirra Center + FMC Tower
- One Liberty Place
- Two Liberty Place
- Pittsburgh - Allegheny County Courthouse
- City County Building
- Gulf Tower
- Koppers Building
- One Oxford Center
- Rivers Casino
- Pottstown - Pottstown Hospital - Tower Health

Lighting up May 28th through May 30th

- Harrisburg - Pennsylvania State Capital

Click here for a link to:

- Pictures of last year's light ups in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia
- More quotes relating to the light up event
- Upcoming PATSA events to highlight