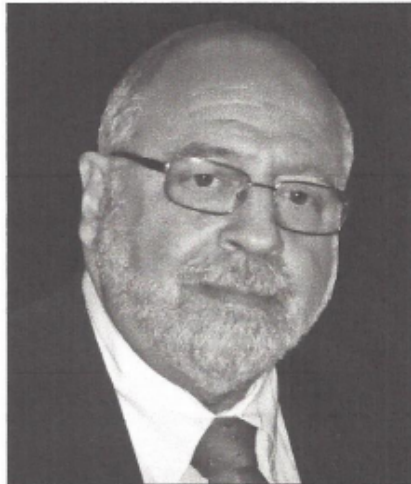

“Volunteering for TSA has been an invaluable experience.”

Don Donin is a Professor in the Office Administration and Technology Program at Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn, New York. A long-time member of TSA and a co-founder of the New York City Chapter, Don received the 2010 TSA Lifetime Achievement Award, which was presented at the 2010 National TSA Conference.

Don's life seems to chart the meandering path of Tourette Syndrome awareness from his childhood with a mysterious disorder to his present conflicts with the limited understanding among some professionals.

“Years ago I had to carry pamphlets to give to doctors. I thought those days were over until two recent experiences in painful physical therapy sessions. I told one physical therapist that I had TS and that cursing was sometimes part of it. But when some curses came out she said, ‘You can't do that here!’ But, I said, ‘Did you read my chart?’ ‘Yes, but you still can't do that here,’ she replied. The same thing happened with a young nurse at another facility. She expected to see the TS she'd seen on daytime TV shows. I gave her a short in-service, but she wasn't receptive. There's still more to do in educating the medical arena,” Don said.

Don's sense of humor helps keep some of his TS adventures in perspective, and as an educator he is on the frontline in changing young lives. He developed a partnership program between his college and TSA, the Kings Borough Community College/TSA Service Learning Program. His students learned about TS, created websites and awareness posters. A group of winners were selected to attend the TSA national conference, and four received \$300 prizes. Don was awed by TSA's response to his students.



“I teach students who had never traveled before, never stayed in a hotel. They were so impressed by how they were treated by TSA. They also gave a presentation to the president of the college — a highpoint in their educational experiences. These students are very bright, good students with problems and difficult lives. Being honored at KBCC and at the conference was a very moving experience. They also learned a great deal about TS, and the process put a ‘face on it’ as they researched the disorder. They were left with an understanding of TS, and they can transfer that understanding to an understanding of disabilities in general,” Don said.

Don's own life has been marked by the changing awareness of TS. He even managed to get a peek at his school health records in elementary school. He recalls when a Physical Education teacher who needed to alphabetize the records took a “... short cut and lined us up in alphabetical order. I looked at mine and noticed that Mrs. Abramowitz wrote ‘very nervous, severe tics.’ Now, an observant teacher would have known what she was seeing and I'd have been diagnosed. I'd have had access to a resource room, but none of that existed then. In college I remember asking our family physician about when my tics would go away. He said, ‘when you get married.’”

Don was finally diagnosed with the help of an Anne Landers newspaper column sent to him by his mother when he was 44. That led him to the wonderful Dr. Ruth Bruun, and decades of involvement with TSA.

“As a long-time TSA volunteer, I look back and see the progress the organization has made. It is very gratifying to think of the many ways in which local chapters and the national office have helped the Tourette Syndrome community. Volunteering for TSA has been an invaluable experience.”
