

Today, more than ever before, young people are involved in competitive sports. Soccer, football, basketball, baseball and track are among the most popular sports played by high school students. We encourage young men and women to participate: to become a part of a team, to exhibit determination, to be driven to succeed, to push themselves harder than they could ever imagine – to WIN.

The parents of these young athletes do all they can to enable their children to participate in these sports safely. They purchase the protective gear, read and sign all of the appropriate consent forms, ensure that their children receive their sports physicals, and hope that injuries never occur. The thought rarely enters their minds that these student athletes may be in danger of something far more serious – sudden cardiac death.



**On October 12, 2000, 15 year old Louis T. Savino, III was practicing** for an upcoming soccer game with his Lower Makefield team on Macclesfield in Yardley, Pennsylvania. **During one of the drills, he collapsed on the field.** With his mother looking on, facing a tragedy that no parent should ever have to experience, Louis could not be resuscitated despite valiant efforts by his coach and two bystanders, who provided CPR.

Louis was one of more than twenty high school students who died in 2000 of sudden cardiac death resulting from an

undetected heart disorder. Since 1982, more than 450 high school and college athletes have died in the United States. Most were victims of heart failure. It is a problem that accounts for 85% of sudden death in athletes between the ages of 15 and 20. Louis died of a congenital heart disorder known as Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy.

**What is hypertrophic cardiomyopathy?**

Congenital heart disease is the leading cause of non-traumatic sudden athletic death, with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM) being the most common cause. HCM consists of a thickening of the heart muscle, which disrupts the main pumping chamber of the heart. Studies show it to be the cause of nearly 40% of heart attacks in student athletes. People who suffer from this condition are at constant risk of sudden death. Exercise can trigger cardiac arrhythmia or a sudden heart attack.

**How can this happen?**

For some, HCM is a congenital condition that goes undetected. Others develop a thickening of the heart muscle as a result of prolonged athletic training or high blood pressure. More commonly, the condition develops in association with growth and is usually apparent by the person’s late teens or early twenties.

**Warning Signs During Exercise**

In Louis’ case, there were warning signs. One month prior to his death, he experienced unusual shortness of breath, chest pain and dizziness during a soccer practice. His mother immediately

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consulted Louis’ physician who examined Louis and misdiagnosed him with having exercise-induced asthma.

**The warning signs of a heart disorder include:**

<b>Shortness of Breath</b>	Exercise capacity may be limited by breathlessness and fatigue.
<b>Chest Pain with Exertion</b>	Pain is usually brought on by exertion and relieved by rest. But pain can also occur at rest or during sleep.
<b>Heart Palpitations</b>	An uncomfortable awareness of the heart beat. Palpitation may start suddenly, appear to be very fast and may be associated with sweating or light-headedness.
<b>Light-Headedness and Blackouts</b>	Persons with the condition may experience lightheadedness, dizziness and more seriously, blackouts. Episodes may occur in association with exercise.

*It is vitally important that any new or unusual symptoms be thoroughly investigated. Symptoms such as palpitations, chest pain and blackouts during exercise should not be ignored. The responsibility for identifying a student’s health problems doesn’t fall on one adult alone. If parents suspect their student athlete may have a physical ailment, they should have a family doctor do as complete a medical examination as possible. Likewise, coaches and trainers should alert a parent when an athlete complains of any of these symptoms.*

**What the child's doctor should know about his/her family history:**

Make the child's physician aware of a family history of:

- heart disease
- sudden cardiac death in a relative who died before the age of 50
- Marfan's Syndrome

**Tests that may Detect Congenital Heart Disease**

Depending on the individual circumstances and symptoms, more testing can be done such as resting EKG, stress EKG and echocardiogram.



Funds raised will be used for the distribution of awareness pamphlets and to purchase Automatic External Defibrillators (AED's) for schools and sports fields.

*Information provided by the Children's Health Information Network, [www.tchin.org](http://www.tchin.org); and endorsed by Gerard Margiotti, Jr., MD, FAAP; and Catherine Spratt-Turner, D.O.*

For Brochure reprints please contact the Foundation.

The contents of this brochure are for informational purposes only and should not be substituted for professional advice. Always consult your child's physician with any questions and concerns.

## Louis T. Savino, III

Louie was my best friend. He was everything a friend could ask for. His joyfulness never failed to put a smile on my face, and his values and selfless attitude influenced all who knew him.

Louie was a dedicated community service leader – an active member of the service council at his school, a tutor at an elementary school and a regular visitor to a home for the elderly. He never failed to put the concerns of others before his own. Since his death, Louie's parents and aunt have started a foundation in his name. The mission of the Louis T. Savino, III Foundation is to increase awareness of sudden cardiac death in high school athletes and promote education related to the symptoms and screening for the detection of heart disorders and disease. It is through the foundation that Louie's passion for serving others will live on.



Although Louie exhibited tremendous generosity and charity to his school and friends, I remember him best for his unique character and terrific sense of humor. We were constantly laughing when we were together.

More than anything, though, Louie was a great friend. He was the kind of kid you could call at 11:30 at night with a homework question, and he would stay up the extra half-hour to help you. I would always turn to him to lift me up when I was having a tough day. He was the best friend that I never thought I'd lose.

His death came as an incredible, unimaginable shock. It never occurred to me that a 15-year old would have a heart attack. The last afternoon of his life I said to him after school, "See ya tomorrow," never thinking that those would be my final words to Louie.

If there is one positive thing that we can learn from this horrible tragedy, it should be that these kinds of teenage deaths can be averted. We need to educate coaches and parents about sudden cardiac death, make physical examinations more comprehensive, and, most importantly, increase awareness of HCM so we can ultimately prevent sudden cardiac death in high school athletes. If we can achieve that, Louie's legacy will live on forever.

*Tain Lewis*

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*...getting to the heart of the matter*



## Louis T. Savino, III Foundation

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Dedicated to Increasing Awareness of Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy and Preventing Sudden Cardiac Death in Student Athletes

Toni Pellegrini, Co-Founder – Treasurer  
Mother of Louis Savino

Lorraine Sikora, Co-Founder – Board President  
Aunt of Louis Savino

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