

Tant Family Medical Journey

The Tant family grew up in the small beach town of Flagler Beach, Florida. Tom and Barbara Tant both work for the school district. Both of their sons, Tommy and Will, spent their time surfing, playing school sports, and attending school. The family spent most of their time at the beach since both of their sons were avid surfers. The local surf community became their family.

At the age of 24, Tommy Tant tragically passed away at home in his sleep due to a rupture in his aorta (the large artery that carries blood away from the heart). The unexpected loss of Tommy sent shock waves through the tight knit family and their community. Doctors cited Marfan syndrome as a possible cause for Tommy's death and decided to check for aneurysms in both his father, Tom, and younger brother, Will. Yet, both father and son were fine.

A year after Tommy passed away, local Flagler Beach high school students organized a memorial surf contest in memory of Tommy. In October 1999, the first annual Tommy Tant was held. Eleven years later, the Tommy Tant Memorial Surf Classic continues to bring the community together. The weekend surf contest now boasts over 300 amateur and professional surfers, a locally run food festival, and has raised nearly \$50,000 in scholarships to more than 60 students and \$7,000 in donations to the local food bank.

Will Tant, who was a professional surfer, is now the director of the Tommy Tant Memorial Surf Classic and a professional surfer. While organizing the event two years ago, Will visited the National Marfan Foundation website to research opportunities to raise awareness for the condition that was possible linked to his brother's death. Will read the information on the site and realized he had many of the characteristics of Marfan syndrome. After sharing the realization with his girlfriend, Will visited the doctor to have his aorta evaluated. Shockingly, Will's aorta was enlarged. Doctors also strongly recommended that both his parents be checked. As a result, doctors found an aortic aneurysm (enlargement) in his mother, Barbara. In 2010, Barbara had open-heart surgery to repair her aneurysm. During the surgery, doctors realized she was weeks away from death.

In November 2012, the 13th annual Tommy Tant will take place in Flagler Beach, Florida, with Will again as the director. Barbara Tant has recovered from her surgery, returned to teaching high school and will attend the event. Both Tom and Barbara are heavily involved with running the event and many of Barbara's students volunteer. In addition to raising money for scholarships and the local food bank, the Tommy Tant Memorial Surf Classic will now raise awareness and support for the National Marfan Foundation.

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