

On a Path with a Purpose



Jesse Saperstein with just some of the hundreds of letters he has sent to family and friends about his fundraising hike.

By Renee Cho

Jesse Saperstein, a determined 22-year-old from Pleasant Valley in Dutchess County, is right now trekking the daunting Appalachian Trail to raise money for Camp TLC, a free camp for teens with AIDS. When he was young, Jesse had been deeply impressed by the HBO movie, *Blood Brothers: The Joey DiPaolo Story*, about a boy who contracted AIDS through a blood transfusion. At Hobart and William Smith College, Jesse became resident advisor for the AIDS Awareness House to promote safe sex and help eliminate the perception that AIDS is only contracted by gays or linked to high-risk behavior. He took the opportunity to invite Joey DiPaolo to speak at the college about Camp TLC in Port Jervis, which DiPaolo runs for HIV-infected teens.

After volunteering at Camp TLC himself, Jesse decided to hike the entire Appalachian Trail to raise money for the camp. "The camp

serves kids ages 13-19 because adolescence is a critical age when kids need to be accepted for who they are. At Camp TLC, they don't have to pretend they don't have AIDS or hide their status, and for a week, they can feel totally free," Jesse explains.

Jesse began his journey in Georgia on March 9, with the goal of hiking all the way to the trail's end at Mt. Katahdin, Maine, and raising \$100,000, 90 percent of which will go to the camp. He hopes to arrive in Maine before August 21, so that he can make it back to Camp TLC to volunteer again this summer.

If you'd like to learn more about Jesse Saperstein's hike, you can reach him at (845) 325-6152 or email SCIFY1903@aol.com. To contact the Joey DiPaolo Foundation, which supports Camp TLC, call (718) 967-5609 or email joeyaids@aol.com. To donate money, visit www.jdaf.org, or mail a check to: The Joey DiPaolo AIDS Foundation, 108 Vineland Ave., Staten Island, N.Y. 10312. ♦