

Hiking Against AIDS

By [Eyewitness News' Bill Ritter](#)

(New York -WABC, March 17, 2005) — One boy's tragedy - 15 years ago - is still motivating others. Joey DiPaolo is his name, and he contracted AIDS through a blood transfusion when he was a little boy. Now his struggle has sparked one man to start a 2,000 mile journey to raise awareness of AIDS.

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[Jesse Hikes The Appalachian Trail](#)

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It was huge news back in 1990. 10-year-old Joey DiPaolo discloses he has AIDS, and it ignited a fire storm.

Joey DiPaolo: "100 families decided to protest and keep me out of junior high school. They dragged me further into the limelight. I didn't want to go that route but I used it to my advantage."

Used it to raise awareness about the disease through the Joey DiPaolo AIDS Foundation. The foundation runs Camp TLC, a place where teens living with AIDS find they're not alone.

More than a decade after Joey's disclosure, his story still inspires.

Meet Jesse Saperstein. He will spend the next six months hiking the Appalachian Trail - all 2,174 miles of it - to raise money for Camp TLC. Jesse says everyone can learn from DiPalolo's example.

Jesse Saperstein, Hiker: "It's all about doing the best you can with what life throws at you and not being bitter about what happened."

Today, Joey's about to open his own business, but between then and now there were rough times.

Carol DiPaolo, Mother: "For me the future was just embracing tomorrow and hoping I won't have to bury him."

Carol credits new drugs for keeping her son alive, but she worries about a downside to the drugs - complacency toward HIV - and she says that is part of why makes Jesse's committment is so important.

Carol DiPaolo, Mother: "I just want to say that I am so thankful that Joey is still alive, and I'm so thankful that there are people like Jesse in this world, that really care and know that AIDS is still a problem and that they want to make a difference."

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