# SMC Jan Term Speaker Series Focuses on Lives Well-Lived Best-selling author, and autism and anti-bullying advocate speaks at 1 p.m. today **Bv A. K. Carroll**



Jesse Saperstein Photo provided

661 here's nothing wrong with being really different," said Jesse Saperstein, motivational book "Atypical: Life with Asperger's in 20 1/3 Chapters."

"Everyone has something to offer," he said.

An advocate for autism and antibullying campaigns, Saperstein will be speaking at Saint Mary's College as a part the school's Jan Term speaker series, "Lives Well Lived." The Lamorinda community is invited to take part in over half a dozen lectures on topics ranging from the place of minority voices to the hard work of forgiveness.

Saperstein will be speaking at 1 p.m. today in Hagerty Lounge. He will be stopping at Saint Mary's halfway through his Bay Area tour for his latest book, "Getting a Life with Asperger's." He is being brought in with support from Jan Term and the Catholic Institute of Lasallian Social Action (CILSA). The idea of contacting Saperstein came from Michelle hard way. Barker, who serves as the administrative coordinator for CILSA and has a advocate, Saperstein speaks from his daughter with Asperger's.

disabilities are included in the marginalized groups within our society who are victims of injustice," said Barker. throughout adulthood," he said, not-She was reminded of this when she ing that people still misinterpret his heard Saperstein speak last September, as his message falls directly in line with Saint Mary's mission of so- sued finding the owner of a lost debit

cial justice.

Being a public speaker first entered Saperstein's mind during college, when he served as the residential advisor for the AIDS Awareness House at Hobart and Williams Smith Colleges. During that time Saperstein watched "Blood Brothers: The Joey DiPaolo Story," a documentary based on the life of Joey DiPaolo, who contracted AIDS through a blood transfusion as a teenager, and went on to become a renowned AIDS activist. Saperstein got in touch with DiPaolo and decided that speaking and activism was just the sort of thing he wanted to do.

Following college, Sapterstein set out to accomplish this goal. Sponsored by the DiPaolo AIDS Foundation, he planned to hike all 2,174 speaker and best-selling author of the miles of the Appalachian Trail. It took him seven months, and in that time he raised \$19,000 for pediatric AIDS. He attributes his dogged persistence to having Asperger's syndrome. "Most people eventually get to that point where they [give up]," Saperstein said. "I never seem to reach that point unless it's an emergency." Frigid temperatures and relentless blizzards were not enough to deter him. "I was able to understand that all I had to do was keep walking."

> Saperstein's desire to write books came about after the trail. "I had a difficult time transitioning to reality," he said. "I lost two careers, [which was] devastating." Writing gave a voice to that pain. "That is how I tend to justify what has happened," Saperstein said. "[By saying] this is what I have to write about." Saperstein hopes that his books will help others and keep them from learning too many lessons the

As an autism and anti-bullying own experiences growing up and liv-"In today's world, people with ing in a world that doesn't always embrace his differences. "I've been bullied a lot in my life, [even] actions and motives, calling him a "stalker" when he relentlessly pur-

card. "[There's] a big myth that it gets my weakness a strength," he said of as we sometimes think we are." better someday. For me, it did not get living with Asperger's. "A lot of peobetter for a very long time."

through tenacious work. "I've made

ple can do that if they want it enough. stein and his journey through a life One of Saperstein's core beliefs is Individuals with Asperger's have well lived, visit www.jessesaperthat all challenges can be overcome ideas and talents that can help others. stein.com. We're not as uncommon or dissimilar

To learn more about Jesse Saper-

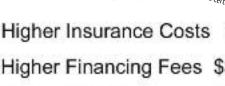






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## **Upcoming Jan Term Speakers at SMC**

Alan and Karen Jabbour

"Life Changing Encounters with Appalachian Culture" Jan. 20, 7 p.m., Soda Center

#### Matthew Boger, Tim Zaal and Jason Cohen "Facing Fear: A Path to Forgiveness"

Jan. 21, 1 p.m., Hagerty Lounge

**Tobias Buckell** "The Future You Don't See" Jan. 26, 7 p.m., Soda Center

#### **Theresa Sparks**

"The Emerging TGNC (Trans-Gender-Non-Conforming) Community: Challenges and Opportunities" Jan. 28, 1 p.m., Hagerty Lounge

MAKE SUMMER COUNT

For more details on the Saint Mary's Jan Term lectures, screenings and performances (all of which are free and open to the public), visit: http://www.stmarys-ca.edu/january-term/jan-term-2015speaker-series.

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