

JACK GALLAGHER

Professional Keynote Speaker
*Insight into Autism,
A Father's Perspective*

Digital Media Kit

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For most of his life, Jack Gallagher has been entertaining.

First as a kid for his family and then for his friends and teachers at school.

Jack started his professional comedy career in Boston during the early 80's. As part of that explosive comedy scene, Jack helped establish such clubs as The Comedy Connection, Stitches and the legendary Ding Ho Comedy Club.

After moving to Los Angeles, Jack became a regular at The Improvisation and added big screen credits to his resume by landing a leading role in *Shakes the Clown* with Bob "Bobcat" Goldthwaite. He has also appeared in *Heartbreak Ridge* with Clint Eastwood and was featured in the made for TV movie *Incident at Ruby Ridge*.

A three time Emmy award winner for his work on PBS, Jack has also appeared on virtually every late night talk show from Johnny Carson's Tonight Show to Late Night with Conan O'Brien.

More recently Jack has made a name for himself as the author of 5 one-man performances including *A Different Kind Of Cool* a play that focuses on the relationship between him and his son, Liam, who is a child with autism.

Hailed as a story that "perfectly portrays the struggles of a parent with a child with autism," Jack is currently presenting a keynote version of the play to parent, civic and educational groups across the country.

Perfect as an opening or closing session, Jack presents a funny, relatable and ultimately moving portrayal of a parent struggling to understand a child who he comes to realize is truly *A Different Kind Of Cool*.

For booking information, please contact differentkindofcool@gmail.com

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"A touching, wonderful, insightful presentation."

Dr. David Amaral Ph.D.
Research Director, M.I.N.D. Institute, UC Davis

"I hope our keynote speaker this year is half as good as Jack was last year! A year later they remember not only your humor, but the message from the heart that you shared about students that we all have in our classrooms. You left a lasting impact on many of our staff."

Howard Burkett, Administrator
North Orange County Regional Occupational Program

"Jack provided a wonderful closing session for our 2012 convention. He had the audience hanging on every word as he brought humor and personal experience to living and loving a child with autism. Our attendees were moved and motivated by his workshop. I highly recommend Jack as a presenter. Thanks again for coming to Oregon!"

Betsy Miller-Jones, Interim Executive Director
Oregon School Boards Association

"Jack did an outstanding job combining humor with an important message about autism to the 900 employees attending our beginning of the year staff meeting. Jack's presentation contributed greatly to our employees feeling excited and inspired to start a new year."

Steven E. Gomes, Ed.D.,
Merced County Superintendent of Schools
Merced County Office of Education

Jack Gallagher... "A Different Kind of Cool"

"Jack rocked the house on Sunday morning at the Oregon School Boards Association Annual Convention with his Keynote presentation. Jack first had us laughing with his stories of self reflection as a parent and his unique interpretations of human behaviors. Jack soon had most of us in tears with his emotion packed personal story as the parent of an autistic child. In addition to the humor and personal connection Jack shared with us basic information regarding Autism Spectrum Disorder that was well received by both educators and board members. I stood by Jack at the back of the room following his keynote and numerous people came up and shared their personal stories related to individuals whose lives had been touched by autism in some way. Jack immediately connected with these folks and I received many positive comments about his work. It was a pleasure to have Mr. Gallagher at our event."

Joe Wehrli,
Director of Board Professional Development
Oregon School Boards Association

"In 25 years of conventions I've rarely heard anyone do a better job of keeping the room laughing while also giving them a great message."

Nicholas D. Caruso, Jr.,
Senior Staff Associate for Field Service
Connecticut Association of Boards of Education

"Thank you so much for sharing your story. I could have listened to you all day!"

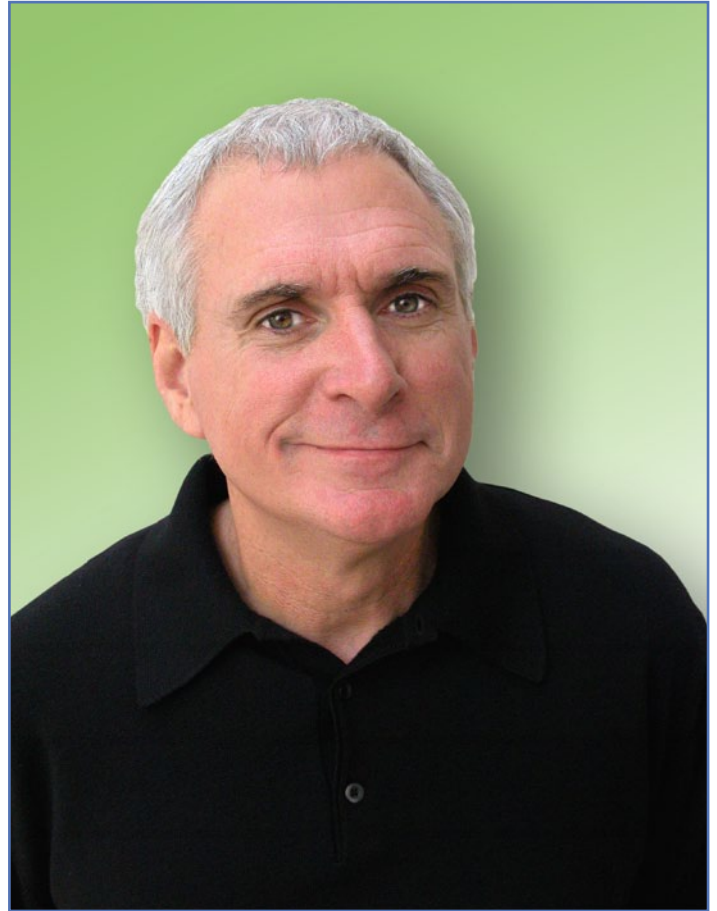
Kelli Embler, Executive Director Autism Speaks

TESTIMONIALS

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*For high-resolution print-ready images,
send requests to differentkindofcool@gmail.com*

HEADSHOTS

JACK GALLAGHER

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Padding around shoeless in his tidy Land Park home, comedian Jack Gallagher seems the quintessence of cool. Open and down-to-earth, a guy clearly comfortable in his own skin, Gallagher tells the stories of his life — his “stuff,” as he calls it — with disarming ease.

Storytelling, after all, is how he’s made his living for more than 30 years.

At 57, Gallagher has seen the national spotlight as a stand-up comic, award-winning PBS television host, TV pitchman, sometime sitcom and film actor and sought-after spokesman, master of ceremonies and comic relief for countless corporate and civic events, trainings and fundraisers. He’s also the author of four one-man plays — the most recent, *A Different Kind of Cool*, making its debut at the B Street Theatre — that riff on the rough and smooth of his life with poignancy and humor.

When people ask, “Who’s that funny guy — you know, that comedian from Sacramento?” there’s really only one answer: Jack Gallagher.

Cool, by any measure.

On this particular mid-August day, however, Gallagher’s first concern is that he must interrupt the rambling storytelling in 45 minutes to pick up his youngest son, Liam, at New Technology High School, where the 14-year-old started ninth grade four days earlier, but would his guest care to tag along?

“I’m the point person for Liam,” says Gallagher, who clearly relishes the role of stay-at-home dad. “I like being around the house.”

Gallagher and his wife, Jean, a senior director with the California School Boards Association, have two sons. Declan, an independent-minded 18-year-old away at college in San Francisco, as an infant was inspiration for Gallagher’s first play, *Letters to Declan*, in 1994. Liam is central to the fourth, which, broadly, explores the passage of parenthood, with its ceaseless, frequently jarring opportunities for self-revelation.

In the car on the way home from school, Liam — dedicated video gamer, budding inventor and gentle soul — talks about the storylines he’s developing for a game about a Japanese-American hero adventuring in Tokyo and a stop-motion animation he wants to create using action figures. Once home, he dives into his homework, which he enjoys and takes seriously. Liam engages his father daily for homework help, and Dad’s math skills are much better as a result.

But lessons in the Gallagher household go beyond schoolwork. *A Different Kind of Cool* explores these lessons, framed by a key thematic element that Gallagher prefers be fully revealed onstage.

Writing about family is hard, he says — and, for this play, even harder.

“We’re a private family. If you look at my work, you’ll see I’m not divulging much. I’ll tell you my stuff, but I won’t tell you my wife’s or my children’s.”

As with his stand-up routines, Gallagher’s plays draw on real events from his life. His first was about Declan; a short-lived brush with Hollywood fame was grist for his second, *Just the Guy*; and his third, *What He Left*, was about his complicated relationship with his father.

But, as in his club work, he’s mastered the delicate art of couching truth in embellishment — just the right amount to elicit laughs of recognition.

“Being funny — nobody knows where it comes from,” says Gallagher, who launched his stand-up career on

continued...

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Boston stages in 1979, learning alongside up-and-comers Steven Wright, Dennis Leary and Bobcat Goldthwait. "When you start out in clubs, it's trial and error. Steve Wright does one-liners. I relate everyday things that happen with a lot of hyperbole."

The approach works for his playwriting, too, although Gallagher's plays are much more than comedy set pieces.

"Jack writes a novel is what he does," says Buck Busfield, director of *A Different Kind of Cool* and producing artistic director of the B Street Theatre, who has collaborated with the comedian to bring his plays to the stage. "It's one long story told in the first person. All I do is a little shaping of the script — we've covered that already, this is redundant, here's the act break. I don't have to do much. With Jack, the great story, the entertainment value you never have to worry about."

In rehearsal, Busfield may suggest rearranging some script elements or, as he did with *Just the Guy*, may ask if Gallagher has an anecdote to insert for theatrical contrast. Busfield will tell him to think about it and return with ideas the next day. But Gallagher, with the creative quickness of a stand-up veteran, can access and process the details and storylines stored in his head, on the spot.

"He'll shuffle through the (mental) index cards and then say, 'OK, OK, I've got it — how about this?' and then he'll just do it," Busfield says. "It's amazing. There's very little I do. It's all there."

A Different Kind of Cool might not have been written had Gallagher not received encouragement from his wife and a phone call from Busfield.

"After the three plays, I thought I was done — it was an unintentional trilogy," Gallagher says. "But then Buck called about a year-and-a-half ago and asked me if I had any ideas."

Gallagher had been keeping a journal of Liam's seventh-grade year transitioning from elementary to middle school, and Jean suggested he pull from that material to form the basis for a new play. It became as much catharsis as theatrical enterprise.

"This is the most personal show," he says. "It's about the difference between my two kids and learning how to live with that. As a society, we don't like different. We like the good different, the different that dances well."

In the play, Gallagher describes his realization that, as a parent, he was headed down the wrong path with his youngest son, a boy unlike his brother. With that realization came another: Coolness is a matter of perspective.

"It's about understanding what we think is cool is ... well, there are other types of cool," says Gallagher, cool guy in his own right. "I thought the play would be about Liam. But it's about me."

"It's amazing how slow we humans are to learn things in terms of big issues," Busfield says. "So this is the story of a guy struggling to get clarity. And it gives him a measure of peace."

The peace is founded on a simple discovery: With love, kindness and a sense of humor, the human heart can journey from dismay and resistance to understanding and appreciation. To celebration even.

Of a different kind of cool.

Janet Motenko is a former writer and editor for *The Sacramento Bee*. Her piece about Jack Gallagher was published in September 2010 in the B Street Theatre playbill for *A Different Kind of Cool*. It is reprinted with permission from *The Bee* and the B Street Theatre.

a different
kind of
COOL

JACK GALLAGHER
jackgallagher.info

"A touching, wonderful, insightful play."

Dr. David Amaral Ph.D.

Research Director

M.I.N.D. Institute UC Davis'

What the critics have said

"Gallagher's naked emotion pushes the story through."

★★★★ *Sacramento Bee*

Jack Gallagher opens up his heart and hearth... with a heartfelt glimpse into the world of autism.

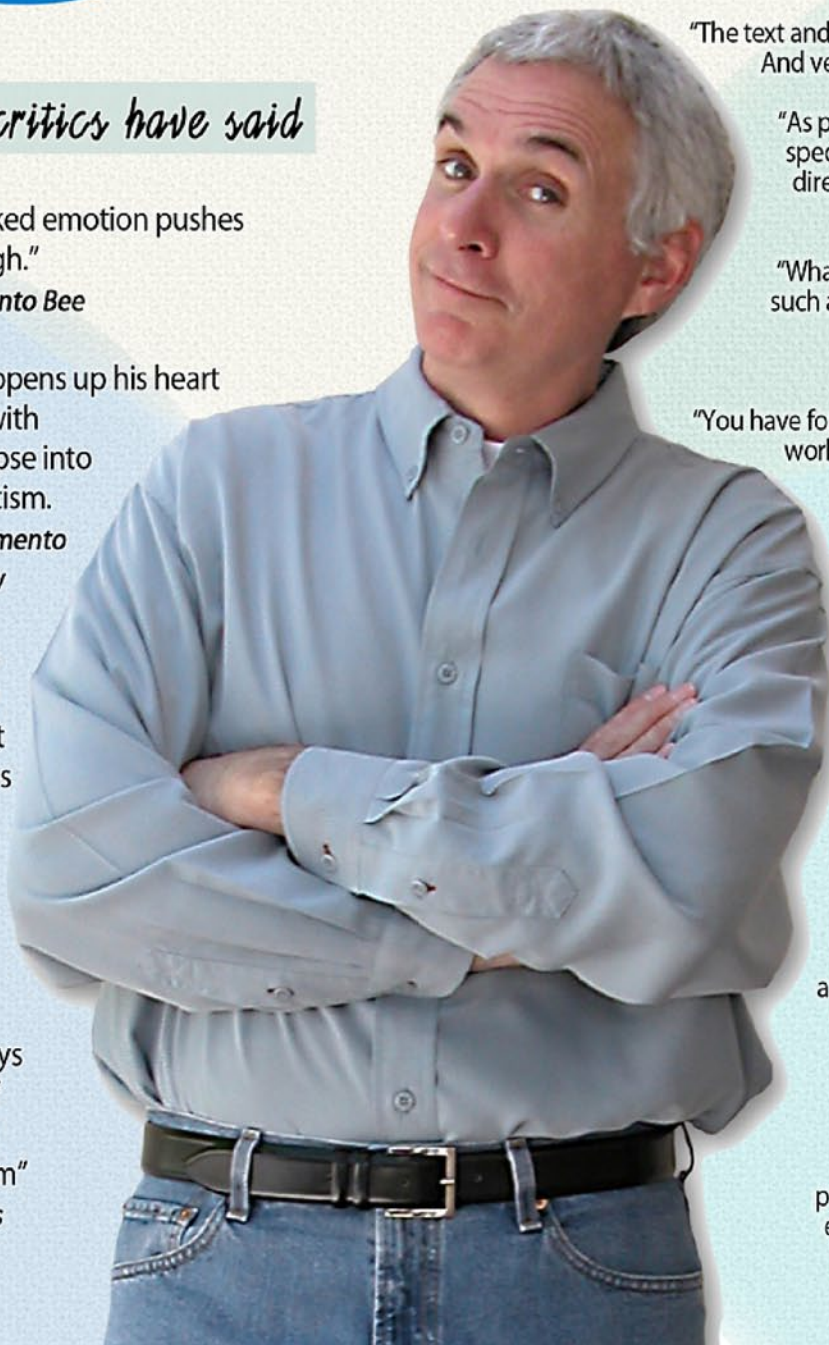
★★★★★ *Sacramento News and Review*

"Autism is not a diagnosis every family faces, but Gallagher makes his story feel universal."

Capitol Public Radio

"This show perfectly portrays the struggles of a parent with a child with autism"

The Autism News



What the audiences have said

"The text and the performance were poignant. And real. And very funny. Bravo. Absolutely brilliant show."

"As parents of a 17 year young man with Autism spectrum disorder we felt like you were talking directly to us. The emotional roller coaster you revealed was spot on."

"What an absolutely amazing performance, and such a beautifully honest sharing of what it's like to be a parent to a child who is, indeed, a different kind of cool."

"You have found a creative way to introduce others to a world they may not have known even existed."

"Thank you for sharing your story of Liam with us. It was filled with love, humor and humanity."

"Our nephew is 6 years old and autistic. We will always look at him differently now, because of your play – it was a gift to us!"

"Thank you for your moving, heart-rending evening. Your writing is superb. There wasn't a minute without rapt attention from all of us in the audience."

"My wife is a 6th grade teacher and has asked to arrange a parents' meeting to view and discuss the play. My son teaches 8th grade, his wife is a high school counselor, we've had tremendous discussions since last Friday night."

"I want to thank you for your incredible performance of *A Different Kind Of Cool* but even more for writing it and presenting the subject of autism in such a funny, serious, entertaining and compassionate way."

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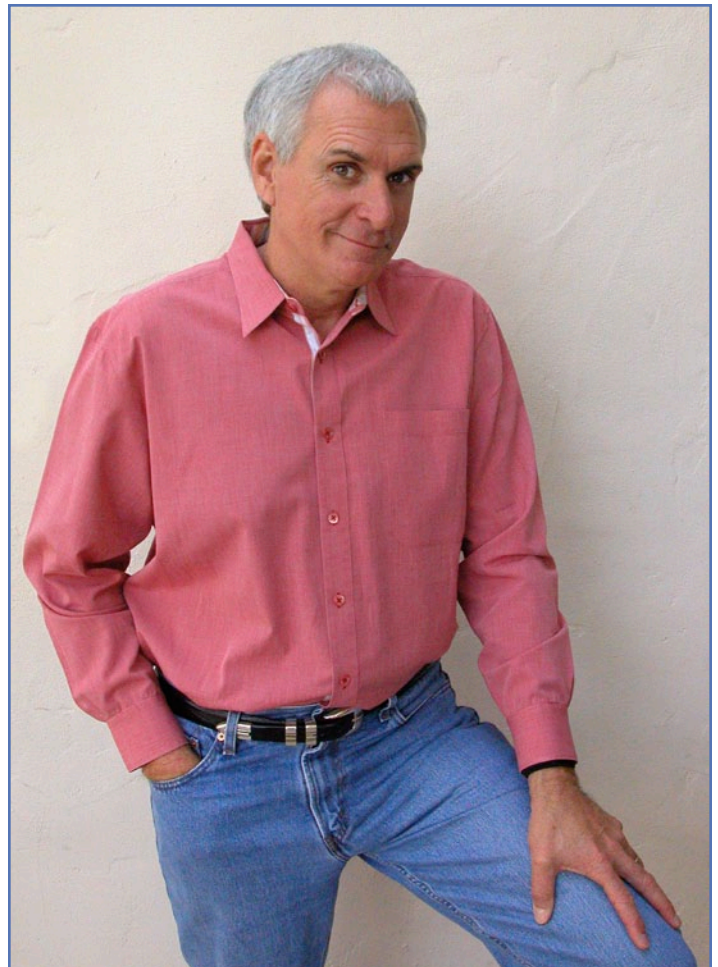
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CONTACT