



# Volunteers Delivering the Gift of Human Kindness

Issue 12 Fall 2004



## Holiday Express Warms Up For Twelfth Ambitious Season

There's a lot of high energy building at Holiday Express as we look forward to our 50-event Twelfth Season in 2004.

Our expanded warehouse is once again filling up with all the donations that really do show up year after year through the generosity of our fans and the dedicated work of our more than 200 general volunteers.

### **Sickles Market – Wine, Cheese and Pies, Pies, Pies**

On Friday and Saturday, October 22 and 23, for the third year, the Sickles Market Fundraiser took center stage with an elegant wine and cheese reception in the transformed greenhouse, complete with both a live and silent auction.

This year, Bob Sickles and his incomparable crew raised an amazing \$24,000 for Sickles' favorite charity – Holiday Express!

### **Save the Date**

The annual Holiday Express Dinner Dance, our major fundraising event of the season, took place on Friday, November 19, at the Ocean Place Resort and Spa on the Long Branch Promenade. Our dinner dance committee was comprised this year of Michele Macchia, Chairperson, Jane Denny, Co-Chairperson, Sherry Henderson, Mary Vesnesky, Amy Robinson, Trish Reiss, Beth McLoone, Donna Edington, Helen Doyle and Erin O'Brien. "We're looking forward to a very exciting evening this year," said Michele Macchia.

*(continued on next page)*



## Twelfth Ambitious Season (continued from page 1)

"With the day of the dinner dance strategically moved to a Friday, it's a great way to start off everyone's weekend during the holiday season," continued Macchia.

Our other two fundraisers this year will see us returning to the Count Basie Theatre on Wednesday, December 15 at 7:30 pm and The Theater at Continental Airlines Arena on Thursday, December 23 at 8 pm. These shows promise to be exciting and energetic concerts for children of all ages – *and are open to the public.*

### 2004 Highlights

Among the 50 events scheduled for the 2004 season, Holiday Express is now bringing the gift of human kindness to all seven centers in New Jersey for the developmentally disabled. "Our first experience was five years ago at New Lisbon and we had a great time," said Amy Robinson. Claudette Keegan, Director at New Lisbon, confirmed Robinson's statement by stating that "Nobody ever comes back." Adding all seven developmental centers to the schedule directly addresses the Holiday Express mission. "This is absolutely where we need to be," concluded Robinson.

Reviewing new developments at the Holiday Express warehouse, ceiling fans have been installed through the generosity of Colgate Palmolive. This is certainly an energy efficient addition for the larger facility and will keep the heat flowing in the winter and help cool off operations in the summer! And we'll have an official "room of value" – a secure location for many gifts – once again through the generous efforts of US Homes who will be donating the material and labor to build the room in the warehouse.

Our Twelfth Season is shaping up to be one of the most ambitious – what else would you expect from the efforts of Holiday Express volunteers!

***It is the mission of Holiday Express to deliver music, food, gifts and friendship to the mentally disabled, those living with illnesses such as cancer and AIDS, the homeless, the isolated elderly and others in need of the gift of human kindness during the holiday season and throughout the year.***

#### Holiday Express Communications Group Contributors

John Bollinger, Peter DeMarco, Alan Grant, Delores Holmes, Layonne Holmes, Denise Lang, Frank McGarry, Joan Mercer, Krista Newbert, Denise O'Hara, Joe Petillo, Nancy Sabino, Mike Sodano, Barbara Willis

Newsletter Graphic Design by Jill Weiss

Photos by Scott Longfield, George Curtis, Linda Rowe and HolEx friends

Holiday Express is a volunteer, non-profit, non-sectarian, registered 501(c)(3) organization.

#### Board of Directors

Timothy McLoone, President

Amy Broza, Vice President

Ann Robinson, Vice President

Jim Celestino, Vice President

Barbara Murphy, Treasurer

Helen Doyle, Secretary

Jane Denny, Recording Secretary

968 Shrewsbury Ave, Tinton Falls, NJ 07724

Tel: (732) 544-8010 Fax: (732) 544-8020

email: [holidayexpress@comcast.net](mailto:holidayexpress@comcast.net)

<http://www.holidayexpress.org>

Introducing...

# THE ASBURY PARK BOYS & GIRLS CLUB Chorus



The Shore's newest musical group may have some of the smallest members, but their sound is big and their impact will be even greater.

The Asbury Park Boys & Girls Club Chorus began last summer and is administered through The Boys & Girls Clubs of Monmouth County.

Comprised of more than 50 local youth of all ages, and headed by Rita Peavy, the chorus was created out of our desire to reach deeper into the community and empower other

groups. The program is supported by our friends at Meridian HealthCare, and Holiday Express will act as mentor for this program.



The Chorus will join Holiday Express at select events – a few stops on their road to greatness. Please be sure to look for them in the near future!

# Five-Star Meals Served at Five Events in 2003

by Barbara Willis



*Once upon a time,* Holiday Express consisted solely of a small band of troubadours. Although these volunteers brought music, gifts, and good cheer to those less fortunate, as the organization continues to do today, it was on a much smaller scale. One of the missing ingredients was food. On those rare occasions when food was included, it was something simple to transport, such as cupcakes and donuts.

In its second year, Holiday Express purchased pizzas or subs to give the shows more of a party atmosphere. Then one day, Peter Cancro, owner of Jersey Mike's Subs, solved the food dilemma by donating literally thousands of sub sandwiches, chips, and beverages – enough to serve clients at 25 to 30 events. His generosity has been repeated year after year.

About four years ago, the Holiday Express Board reflected on whether it would ever be possible to introduce hot meals from upscale restaurants to clients at some of the events. An initial experiment was conducted at St. John's Soup Kitchen in Newark, with a Christmas Eve brunch delivered from McLoone's Riverside Dining, the establishment owned by Holiday Express founder and president, Tim McLoone. This has since become an annual tradition, with the number of meals served at the St. John's event rising from 200 the first time brunch was served to more than 700 meals in 2003!

The desire to further expand the food program took flight when Holiday Express started attracting volunteers with experience in the restaurant industry. One such volunteer, semi-retired businessman Jack Readie, had operated a catering operation and was accustomed to transporting meals to different sites. Rick and Andy Bott of Merri-Makers, an upscale banquet and catering facility in

Sea Bright, had also become involved with the organization. Executive Board Member, Barbara Murphy, offered to take on the challenge of being the "restaurant/food coordinator." With the help of restaurant experts and volunteers with a keen interest in food service, Holiday Express succeeded in delivering full-course dinners last year to five facilities: Elijah's Promise in New Brunswick, St. Paul's Shelter in Paterson, Eva's Kitchen in Paterson, St. John's Soup Kitchen in Newark, and several small groups (including Lunch Break of Red Bank and the Long Branch Senior Citizens) that came together in the gym of Rumson Country Day School. Sites were considered where the clients had no special dietary restrictions and a large kitchen was available.

According to Murphy, "These restaurant shows were a wonderful experience for everyone involved. The clients got a great meal, and Holiday Express volunteers were able to interact with everyone on a very personal level while serving the food. It really made a difference."

The goal is to recruit more restaurateurs so the program can be expanded in 2004 – and beyond. "We've learned how to do this well enough to move the program to another level," McLoone notes. "This year, we'd like to serve hot meals at a dozen shows."

One thing's for sure: It's a far cry from cupcakes and donuts!

## Food, Glorious Food



*Umm – umm good! Try to imagine the scents and tastes associated with these culinary delights!*

**Eva's Kitchen:** Rick Bott and one of his chefs from Merri-Makers delivered tender chicken Murphy and rice, complete with salad, dinner rolls, and dessert. Rick has already offered to do more events this year.

**St. Paul's Shelter:** Tony Lopez, a friend of volunteer Ron Bruer, arranged for a restaurant to package "finger-licking good" barbecue dinners that the Holiday Express volunteers picked up and served.

**Elijah's Promise:** McLoone's Riverside Dining and one of its chefs, Ryan, prepared an Italian feast consisting of spaghetti and meatballs with salad and dessert.

**Rumson Country Day School:** This show, which brought together several small groups, featured an all-American favorite: meatloaf, mashed potatoes, and carrots, donated and prepared by Salt Creek Grille's Steve Bidgood, his chef Rich Deutch, and staff. Desserts were furnished by the parents of the Rumson Country Day School.

**St. John's Soup Kitchen:** A lavish Sunday brunch was furnished to the St. John's Soup Kitchen clients courtesy of McLoone's.

Salt Creek Grille's Steve Bidgood



Rick and Andy Bott of Merri-Makers

# Harvesting Relationships with the Community

by Barbara Willis



**B**ob Sickles, owner and operator of Sickles Market in Little Silver, New Jersey, not only believes in the principle of giving back to the community...he LIVES it.

Bob and his siblings got to know their neighbors and feel a sense of community from an early age when working at the family market. As he matured, he developed a respect for supporting the greater good. "We are all part of our community, and I think it's important to participate in its growth and general health, to the extent that we can," Bob explains.

Bob's association with Holiday Express began several years ago when he saw the band perform at the Rockefeller Center tree lighting ceremony. "I had known about Holiday Express for awhile," he states, "but it wasn't until that night that I recognized what a powerful and positive charitable force they had become."

In 2001, Bob selected Holiday Express to be the recipient of the proceeds from the market's Pie Baking Contest. However, fate interfered with plans for the 2001 fundraiser. Since charitable giving locally and around the country was being diverted to the families and businesses affected by the 9/11 tragedy, Bob decided to cancel the event that year and gave Holiday Express a "rain check" for 2002.

In 2002, proceeds from the Pie Baking Event amounted to \$12,000. Bob made Holiday Express the beneficiary again in 2003, with a two-day event that featured a Wine and Cheese Tasting Party and Auction, followed the next day by the Pie Baking Contest. This dynamic duo of activities raised \$20,000.

"The event is always a real team effort involving our staff, volunteers, and friends," Bob states. The team delivered another successful event in 2004, culminating in a check to Holiday Express for nearly \$24,000.

Fundraisers have become a part of the Sickles Market philosophy of good business. From its roots as a small fresh produce stand started by Bob's grandfather in the 1940s, the market has blossomed into a full-service year-round operation, with both commercial and charitable interests. The market features produce from around the world (as well as from Sickles' own farm), gourmet cheeses, deli meats and hot entrees, exotic plants, fresh cut flowers, and exquisite gift baskets.

Although Bob finds himself at the market almost every day, he now is able to take vacations and have more balance between work and his personal life, thanks to a dependable, full-time staff and the help from his family. Bob and his wife, Leslie, have three children, ranging from 1st grade through college.

With a wonderful family and an enriched life, Bob feels that sharing good fortune with others is "...simply the right thing to do."

Besides Holiday Express, Sickles Market supports Lunch Break, The Two River Theater, and Monmouth Health Care Foundation, among other community groups. Holiday Express is proud to have Bob as part of our team!

## Baking Dough Yields Real Dough

Holiday Express once again was the beneficiary of the annual Wine & Cheese Tasting and Auction, and Pie Baking Contest in the transformed greenhouse at Sickles Market on Friday, October 22 and Saturday, October 23.

The Pie Baking Contest winners are:

### In the Culinary Student Division

1st (\$500 cash)

Sheila Waples

Art Institute of Philadelphia

2nd (\$200 cash)

Noelle Summers

JNA Institute of Arts

3rd (\$100 cash)

Adrienne Robustelli

Culinary Education Center of

Monmouth County

(a joint program of Brookdale Community College and Monmouth County Vocational Arts Program)

### In the Professional Division

1st (\$500 cash)

Susie Raskiewicz, Little Silver  
Moonstruck Restaurant, Asbury Park

2nd (\$200 cash)

Cathy Mandel, Freehold

Doris & Ed's Seafood Restaurant  
Highlands

3rd (\$100 cash)

Debbie Fragale, Long Branch  
Between Crossings  
Long Branch

### In the Amateur Division

#### Apples only

1st (\$500 cash)

Vera Cevaglia, Tinton Falls

2nd (\$100 Sickles Market gift certificate)

Allison Albainy, Fair Haven

3rd (\$50 Sickles Market gift certificate)

Evan Raskiewicz, Little Silver

#### Apples PLUS

1st (\$500 cash)

Patty Skinner, Little Silver

2nd (\$100 Sickles Market gift certificate)

Mike Squillante, Allenhurst

3rd (\$50 Sickles Market gift certificate)

Roberta Porzilli, Flemington



BOB SICKLES,  
 OWNER AND  
 OPERATOR  
 OF SICKLES MARKET,  
 NOT ONLY BELIEVES  
 IN THE PRINCIPLE  
 OF GIVING BACK  
 TO THE COMMUNITY,  
 HE LIVES IT.



## Helping Holiday Express Deliver

# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

*Peter DeMarco first became aware of Holiday Express when he read an article in the Sunday Asbury Park Press – one year after the group's inception. "What Holiday Express was about struck an immediate chord with me."*

Peter DeMarco is a volunteer who wears many hats. He's an Advisory Board Member, Chairperson of the Product Acquisition Committee, Communications Committee member, solicitor for the Dinner Dance Ad Journal and more.

A graduate of Pace University in New York, Peter currently commutes to New York City to work for Bloomberg. Most of his career has been involved with the financial bond markets, where he traded for over 22 years. Among his personal achievements, Peter has successfully run five marathons, including three times in the New York City Marathon. He participated in the Empire State Building RunUps Stair Climb, a race from the Lobby to the 86th Floor Observation Deck.

Peter's other community involvement is with the Rainbow Foundation, a New Jersey based charity that is involved with seriously and terminally ill children and their families. He is a member of the Board of Trustees and Dinner Dance Committee. He's also an active parishioner at the Church of St. Leo the Great in Lincroft, where he is a member of the Parish Council, a Eucharistic Minister, a Head Usher, Carnival volunteer and a member of the Nocturnal Adoration Society.

Peter, and his wife Ann have lived in Lincroft for over 23 years. He is a native of New York's "Little Italy" section and she is a native of Illinois. Their daughter Elizabeth is a senior in college. Ann occasionally volunteers with Holiday Express as well, selling merchandise at concerts, and helping with the Annual Dinner Dance. Peter is happy and grateful that Elizabeth volunteered last Christmas Eve at the St. John's Soup Kitchen event in Newark. "It was great to see her involved. It was a good experience for her, and she said that she would do it again."

Peter first became aware of Holiday Express through an *Asbury Park Press* article in December 1994. "What Holiday Express was about struck an immediate chord with me," Peter said. "I read where they were going to have a benefit concert at Tradewinds in Sea Bright." Ann, Peter and friends attended that magical evening. "It was an



incredible, enjoyable, memorable event. Seeing and hearing about Holiday Express is believing."

While getting tickets for the Tradewinds concert the following year, Peter asked Program Director Donna Edington if she needed help. "If I believe in something, I tend to get involved, if I am able." Peter became a Holiday Express volunteer at that last event of that 1995 season.

"What's most challenging for Holiday Express, I think, is the organizing of the 50 events that are scheduled during the holiday season. There is the enlisting of volunteers for each event, the acquiring of products for the estimated 10,000 to 12,000 gift bags that will be given out during the season, as well as event raffle items, and the corporate gift-giving program. The Product Acquisition Committee solicits a myriad of entities to obtain donations; or, if need be, purchases necessary items, such as personal hygiene items, scarves and gloves."

Peter believes that there is the general desire among those involved with Holiday Express to be able to do more – both individually

and as an organization. "One of the most memorable Holiday Express experiences was being a coordinator of the Columbine High School concert in Littleton, CO, in December 1999, the season following the tragedy in April of that year." He continues, "What is remembered over the years is the gratitude of those with whom we visit. For instance, the 'God Bless You' that you may receive from someone who is in line at a soup kitchen. To see how much those that we interact with enjoy our visit, and the joy that is shared, is very gratifying."

Peter went on to say, "Holiday Express is like a family, with so many members of various backgrounds, talents, and abilities. What is similar is the sense of dedication in its purpose to share the gift of the goodness of the human touch to those with a diversity of needs. Ideally, everyone, everywhere, can keep the spirit of Christmas and the holiday season – loving, caring, giving, sharing – alive, each day throughout the year."

*...Thank You, Peter!*



---

*Where do we begin when focusing on a volunteer who is always on the go personally and professionally – and yet continues to sign on to manage some of the most demanding events for Holiday Express? Meet the dedicated Jane Robins Denny!*



**T**his busy lady joined Holiday Express in the fall of 1999. Jane Denny served as Holiday Express' Dinner Dance Co-chair in 2002, Chairperson in 2003 and again as Co-chair in 2004. She has served as event manager for three years when Holiday Express visited the Rumson Country Day School (RCDS). Jane also works in the Holiday Express warehouse with fellow volunteers Joan Mercer and Marilee Celestino. As the Director of Community Service for Rumson Country Day School, she also has the capacity to bring student volunteers with her to work in the warehouse.

Jane was looking for programs for the RCDS students when her friend Raquel "Rocky" Falotico, who was already a Holiday Express stalwart, introduced her to the group.

Jane tells us that it's challenging when you want to spend 100% of your time at Holiday Express while juggling time during the season. Nevertheless, every time you see Jane, she always has a big smile for you. She makes volunteering with Holiday Express look a lot easier than it is.

When Jane's not volunteering, she teaches Spanish and History at The Rumson Country Day School along with holding the Director of Community Service Position. Additionally, Jane teaches the 8th grade substance abuse class, called "Sex, Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll."

An adjunct professor of history at Brookdale Community College, Jane also serves as the Director of Education for the Center for Holocaust Studies there. "My special academic focus is the history of the Holocaust. We use this as a prism through which we can examine our contemporary problems. My biggest challenge recently has been working with juvenile bias crime offenders.

I designed a 12-week course, in conjunction with the Monmouth County Prosecutor's office for young people who have been convicted of a bias crime; this course is part of their sentencing package. What an eye opener this experience has been! These kids have fallen through the cracks and live outside of the support and guidance that helps young people make good decisions as they grow up."

Jane's husband Dick is a mechanical engineer and volunteers for Holiday Express as a truck driver for her events. He also does set-up and warehouse work. Dick helped Joan design a floor plan for the current warehouse. Their son Bryant recently graduated from Wheaton College, where he majored in Sociology and played goalie as captain of the lacrosse team. He is now looking for his niche in the working world.



"Watching my students interact with our guests at the shows at school is priceless. I can see incremental and irreversible changes in their world-view and I revel in the light that glows from the excitement

and happiness that this person-to-person experience elicits. They are flying for days after being elves."

She goes on to say, "I could never have imagined the treasures that have come my way through Holiday Express – the community of volunteers that shares a sense of commitment and purpose that has extended my family in the most meaningful of ways. There is a concept in my faith called Tikkun O'lam – which means 'repairing the world' – a commitment to leave the world a better place because of your actions and involvement. We are all doing that and I am so proud to be a small part of our efforts to repair the world."

*And we're happy to be a part of your world too...Thanks, Jane!*

We deeply appreciate your generosity – without it, Holiday Express could not deliver.



968 Shrewsbury Ave  
Tinton Falls, NJ 07724  
www.holidayexpress.org



NONPROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
PERMIT NO. 81  
RUMSON, N.J.

## SAVE THE DATE HOLIDAY EXPRESS SPECIAL EVENTS

Saturday, December 11, 2004

10 am to 5 pm

NJ101.5 FM

Live Radio Broadcast  
from Jenkinson's

Wednesday, December 15, 2004

Count Basie Theatre

Red Bank

Wednesday, December 22, 2004

7 am to 10 am

95.5 FM WPLJ

Live Radio Broadcast

Thursday, December 23, 2004

The Theatre at Continental Arena

August, 2005

3rd Annual Golf Classic

## 2004 Wish List

Every year we ask for your help in filling the gift bags given to over 12,000 adults and children. With your generosity, we have met that need. This year we'll be "upping the ante," with plans to give needed items (and fun stuff too) to 16,000 deserving folks. It's a goal we're proud of and we thank you for making it possible.

"We have been blessed with generous corporate donations this year," says Gift Coordinator Joan Mercer. "The items we really need are scarves (any color, any size), magic knit stretchy gloves (great for kids or as an extra layer for adults), and "energy" snack bars (the more calories, the better). Many thanks from all the elves in the warehouse."

If you'd like to make a donation, please contact our warehouse at

732-544-8010 or [holidayexpress@comcast.net](mailto:holidayexpress@comcast.net).

### Targeted Products for Gift Bags

#### Numbers based on 10,000 Adults, 2000 Teens, 600 Children, 300 Babies

4000 blankets	10,000 toothbrushes	4000 rain ponchos
4000 hooded fleece	10,000 toothpaste	4000 small folding umbrellas
4000 scarves	10,000 bars of soap	100 rubber shower shoes
5000 adult knit hats	10,000 shampoo	2000 crayons/markers
5000 men's gloves	10,000 body lotion	5000 decks of playing cards
1500 adult mittens	10,000 lip balm	5000+ magazines
3000 men's socks	5000 plastic storage boxes for soap	2000 comic books
1500 children's knit hats	1000 brush and comb sets	5000 wallets
500 children's gloves/mittens	5000 wash cloths	2000 Vit C drops
300 children's scarves	300 packages of assorted	5000 Pez
1000 adult slippers or slipper socks	baby products like shampoo,	5000 boxes animal crackers
600 children's slippers or slipper socks	powder, etc.	5000 HoEx beanie baby bears
3000 white or colored cotton	600 children's shampoo	600 children's backpacks
T-shirts L, XL, XXL	2000 children's toothbrushes	500 small duffle bags