



Volunteers Delivering the Gift of Human Kindness

Holiday Express Yearbook

Season 2008



There's nothing quite like the feeling of turning off the switch and giving yourself over to the power of music – it stirs our emotions, triggers our memories and even gives way to some wild dance moves. For whatever unexplainable reasons, music is a primitive memory we all have and can draw upon when we hear it.

But music's magic doesn't stop there – for some it's a form of therapy and it can be said that is what Holiday Express delivers – the healing power of music. For the 16th consecutive year, Tim McLoone, along with 1,300 merry volunteers, delivered the gift of human kindness to those in need during this past November and December.

“Music speaks what cannot be expressed, soothes the mind and gives it rest, heals the heart and makes it whole, flows from heaven to the soul.”

Anonymous

At a first-time event held in Asbury Park's Convention Hall, Holiday Express had the honor of serving and entertaining more than 700 family members



of the New Jersey National Guard, who are deployed to Iraq. The day came complete with uniformed Guard soldiers who provided safety on this most poignant day.

The event was hosted by Big Joe Henry of 101.5 FM. In attendance was New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine who visited with the families, including Erin DeLuca-Knighton and her life-size foam board cutout of her husband, Dane. Erin takes it to all the family activities – like the children's volleyball games and cross-country meets. They take photos of the pretend daddy at each activity, then post it on MySpace so their actual “Sergeant Daddy” in Iraq can see what they're up to.

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To All Of Our Supporters

I find it increasingly difficult to write these annual messages. The problem is that, although I try to avoid repeating myself when speaking of Holiday Express, it's impossible not to verbalize the sheer wonderment I feel at what we do each year... and how incredible it is that so many of you feel compelled to join in the merriment.

Beyond that "merriment," however, is an incredible amount of physical labor that takes place for months in our warehouse, all to ensure that the Holiday Express trucks are packed with all the necessary supplies and "goodies" to take care of our guests. It takes an intricate network of volunteers to create those special Holiday Express moments we get to experience each year. We've done this 625 times so far and entertained hundreds of thousands of people along the way, and I can't think of any possible reason we should stop now.



Update/Don Pignataro Executive Director

Between November 24 and December 24, we shared the gift of music and human kindness 53 different times. More than 1,300 volunteers contributed their time and talents to build, manage and execute what we call our "event schedule." While it sounds simple, it is not. A list of the types of places we visit on our "event schedule" is included with the season numbers on page 15.

The gift bag packing crew included 35 youth organizations, nine corporate groups and hundreds of individuals who volunteered more than 1,600 hours – in the sometimes hot, and sometimes cold warehouse – to produce more than 15,000 gift bags. The truck loading and unloading crew was in and out daily before the morning elves arrived. The event crews averaged 25 volunteers including musicians, singers, dancers, servers, hand holders, face painters, costume characters and other elf responsibilities. They logged more than 4,900 hours, the bus and trucks traveled over 2,000 miles. Our volunteers get a helper's high, they feel good about what they are doing, they have a positive impact on those we see and they truly make a difference. They may not intentionally seek – but they certainly do get – an emotional return on investment (sorry for the financial reference but it is the popular topic these days).

As this edition goes to print, the economy and the financial stability of charitable organizations is in the forefront of every non-profit correspondence and publication. While many are negative and suggest a doom and gloom future, our belief is to stay true to our cause and continue being a trustworthy, efficient and effective steward of our donors' support. Our staff and Board of Trustees are committed to financial stewardship and are committed to working diligently navigating a shifting landscape. The "event schedule" needs us. As a wise man once said, "worrying is not thinking and complaining is not action."

Thank you for your continued support, we are very grateful so many caring individuals believe in the Holiday Express mission.

It is the mission of Holiday Express to deliver music, food, gifts, financial support and friendship to those with the greatest need for the gift of human kindness during the holiday season and throughout the year.

Newsletter Committee

Jill Weiss – Editor/Graphic Design

Don Pignataro – Contributing Editor

Photos by Scott Longfield, Russ Pangborn and HolEx friends

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

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Giving Partner Program

One of the hallmarks of Holiday Express is its ever-expanding "Giving Partner Program." This program matches Holiday Express donors with specific charitable organizations so the needs of these charities can best be served. The Giving Partner Program is designed to provide a charity with items it needs, but is often unable to acquire. By requesting that each charity provide a "wish list," Holiday Express is able to find an appropriate donor or donors to fulfill the wish list. This matching of donors with charities forges a relationship between the charitable organizations and the benefactors that support them, making them true "partners" in the program.

Peg Ford, our Giving Partner Coordinator, works her magic year after year by matching not only businesses, but also individuals and families with each charity's wish list. If you would like to become involved with Holiday Express as a Giving Partner, please email Holiday Express at halexpress@comcast.net or call (732) 544-8010. Thank you.

Melissa Marshall Creates A Giving Partner Luncheon

During September of 2008, I attended the first annual Holiday Express Clambake as guests of Silver Sponsor Val and Tom DeFelice of Circle BMW. Prior to the evening, I read about the event and looked at the Holiday Express website. At the Clambake, I was overwhelmed by the variety of talent, all donating their time, and the support for people to come together to provide funding for so many organizations in need of holiday cheer.



for me, and made my event idea much more gratifying. It became very personal by actually meeting the people that we would be helping.

On December 14, 2008, seventy-five women attended a luncheon at The Mill in Spring Lake Heights. Most people had heard of Holiday Express, but weren't sure what it was. I had a poster on display which explained the Holiday Express mission, and Don Pignataro was on hand to talk about the organization. I feel that this gathering brought an awareness of Holiday Express and the Giving Partner Program to all of us.

Each ticket sale provided funds to purchase new pots and pans, and other kitchen items, for Spring House. Each guest also brought a new unwrapped gift for a boy or girl up to age four (and those who could not attend also sent donations). We were able to fill an entire sleigh! Sher took the unwrapped gifts that were collected that day, and brought them to Spring House.

One of the mothers at the luncheon has a son who attends School For Children, and she had no idea that Holiday Express was behind the Christmas event that is held there each year. She said that it is her son Griffin's favorite day of the year. She was brought to tears when she met Don Pignataro in person and had the opportunity to thank him.

Russ and I live in Sea Girt with our two boys, Liam, 7 and Luca, 4. I look forward to all and any fundraising that comes my way. We really can make a difference, supporting local friends and neighbors in need. We are also providing a healthy

Before the night was over, I had introduced myself to Don Pignataro and requested to be involved. Fundraising has always been a passion of mine, and in the past few years I have hosted a number of events for The Garden Academy, a school for autistic children. The generosity of those who attend is inspiring, and I have met wonderful people along the way: printers, restaurant staff, boutique owners, and so many more.

I received a call from Peg Ford, Coordinator of the Giving Partner Program. I told Peg about my idea for a holiday luncheon for women, and she partnered me with Spring House, whose "goal is to provide shelter to homeless young mothers and their children while enabling the women the opportunity to gain self-sufficiency while living in a safe, supportive environment."

On November 30, my husband and I attended the Holiday Express event at Rumson Country Day School, where Spring House was one of the groups in attendance. I was introduced to Sher Van Fossan, Executive Director, and the mothers and children who are currently in the program. That day was so emotional

2008 GIVING PARTNERS

Number of organizations with wish lists: 55
Number of organizations with Giving Partners: 31
New Giving Partners: 6

Gifts Given
Solar Birdbath
Commercial Pots and Pans
Flat Screen TV
Winter Coats
Elasto-Gel Therapy Wraps
Wheelchair Swing
Super Sensitive Switch
Tactile Board
Vibrotube
Gem Sphere Reward
Flat Screen Wall Mountable TV
Mega 4 in a Row Game
Small Textured Wall
Reading Pen II
FH Farmhouse Portable Greenhouse Kit
Wii Game Systems
Relationship Series Set
Adaptive Pinball Machine
Movie Projector and Screen
Bunn 2 Pot Coffee Maker, Commercial Home Depot Gift Card
(2) Canon 1.07 mp DVD Camcorders
Dance, Dance Revolution Game and Pad
Borders Gift Cards, \$25 increments
Denny's from Heaven Gift Cards, \$25 increments
MacBook 13" 2.4 Ghz Intel Core 2 Duo Piano
(7) Casio 7.2 mp Digital Cameras
Dell Computer and Monitor
Karaoke Machine
(3) 100 Cup Coffee Pots
Heavy Duty Hand Truck
Commercial Sinks & Kitchen Equipment
Sports Equipment
Several Financial Donations

environment for our children by making them aware of people less fortunate.

I have recently been approached by a group of high school students interested in hosting an event of their own for Holiday Express. They too will have the experience of a lifetime!

I have already committed to hosting the event again on December 6, 2009! There is nothing more fulfilling.

Continued from Page 1

And the Band Played On!

Also on hand was Christie Rampone, a 2004 and 2008 Olympic gold winner in soccer. Christie even got the opportunity to sing with the Holiday Express band and visited with the families.



A second new event, Straight & Narrow, was a huge hit with everyone, and is now a heavy contender with the annual rowdy frivolity at Eva's Village. Our third new group was Norman Bleshman Regional Day School and it was a big success.

Clambake

2008 was also the year we transformed our annual November Dinner Dance into a September Clambake, which raised an astounding \$170,000 to support the mission of Holiday Express.

Nearly 400 people attended and were treated to a balmy evening of ocean breezes, bare feet, a lavish buffet, dancing galore, and all-night entertainment by several bands from within the Holiday Express musician roster. The lighthearted night of fun was a huge success made possible by generous individuals and companies who donated money, time and auction items.

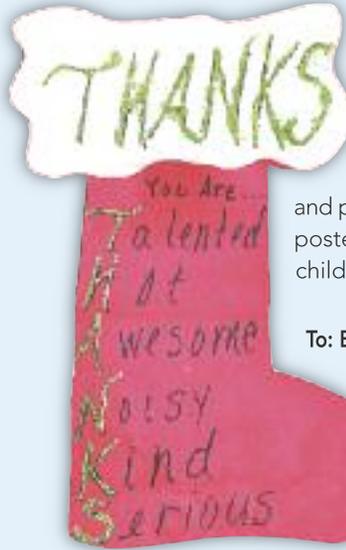
Highlights of the evening included an extremely generous donation of nearly \$40,000 made by Holiday Express friend and sponsor, Carol Stillwell. Stillwell's contribution included underwriting the cost of the event, various auction items, and a cash donation.

A record setting \$26,000 was raised through the live auction. Top items bid on included: a week in St. Maarten, a week in St. John's, a Ruby Heart designed and donated by Michael Gomez – and the always-popular opportunity to sing on stage with the Holiday Express band.

Please join us on September 13, 2009 for our second annual Clambake at our new location on the beach outside McLoone's Pier House Long Branch, NJ.

LETTERS!

WE GET LOTS AND LOTS



In a Holiday Express season that keeps us on the fast track for 53 events in 31 days, we are so very grateful for the expressive acknowledgements that come our way.

This year we once again received a ton of sincere, fun and passionate notes. They arrived in the form of letters, cards, posters, and on our blog. They are drawn and authored by children, adults, seniors, guests, clients and facility staff.

To: Big Joe Henry, New Jersey 101.5 FM

Hi Big Joe!

My son Dominick goes to the Lehman School in Lakewood which is part of the Ladacin Network. I can tell you first hand how wonderful Holiday Express is. They've been involved with his school ever

since he's been going there. Over the years they've sent him home with goodies which have included their CD, backpacks, etc. This year he came home with a backpack full of goodies which included a Holiday Express T-Shirt and baseball hat. This hat has not left his head since then. He just loves them.

When you played their song a few minutes ago, he got all excited and started singing along. That may not sound like much but any parent of a special needs child knows exactly how I felt when he did that. Please pass the word on to Holiday Express how great they are and how much we appreciate them.

Have a wonderful Christmas.

Linda Arcella

From: Big Joe Henry, New Jersey 101.5 FM

Hi Linda,

Thanks so much for the note. I know the great work that Holiday Express does all to well, I am on their Board of Trustees. The millions of smiles and warm feelings that they have provided to so many that could use the holiday spirit is exemplary. Over the years I have watched thousands of individuals in the two short hours that Holiday Express entertains, embrace and enjoy the spirit of Christmas and the Holidays. It is a terrific and humbling sight to see. I will certainly pass on this note to them and thank you for sharing Dominick's enjoyment. Have a beautiful Christmas and thanks again for sharing your story.

My Best,

Big Joe Henry

From: Mike Bernstein

I have loved Holiday Express since I was a young boy. It has been one of our Christmas traditions to attend the concert at Count Basie, and we have more fun every time we go. I can still remember going to the end of the aisle when Bruce began to sing after 9/11. I am a Make-A-Wish child and my wish was granted last March when I got to see the New York Mets in Florida! I recently attended the event at Rumson Country Day School. My illness may be painful and it is inoperable, but I have it; it doesn't have me. I take life one day at a time and we have our faith. I hope to see everyone next year. Thank you for the gift of the Christmas spirit.



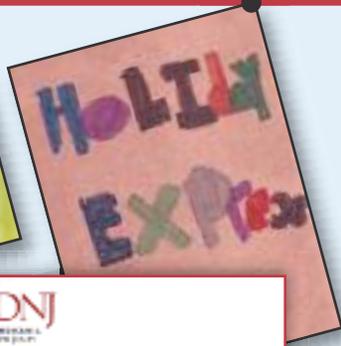
Big "Santa" Joe at Eva's Village



(front) Delores Holmes, Mike Bernstein, Tarika Jean-Pierre (middle) Linda Chorney, Karen Credle, Joe Petillo, Mark Murphy, BethAnn Clayton, Valerie Webb, Jim Mizell (back) Pam Minson, Chad Kaplan, Rob Dye, Layonne Holmes

We Get Letters!

OF LETTERS!



Holiday Express
968 Shrewsbury Avenue
Tinton Falls, NJ 07724

Dear Amy and Staff of Holiday Express:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for bringing your talented and caring musicians to our center on December 2, 2008. It will be an experience that we will never forget. Talented and caring staff performing for our men and women and interacting with each client has made their Holiday Season a memorable one. They are still talking about your performance and asking when you will be back again. Everyone was so wonderful that day making sure our men and women had a great time from a wonderful lunch to the great gift bags you brought for each of them.

The world is a better place because of Holiday Express and you brought the true meaning of Christmas to our center. Our Director said that the concert was the perfect start to our Holiday Season. They are still watching the video of the concert and the pictures of them with the beautiful smiles on their faces is the best gift of all.

Thank you again from the bottom of my heart. I wish each and every one of you the Merriest Holiday Season and a Healthy New Year and hope to see you next year.

Sincerely,
Linda Waltenberg
Passaic County Elks Adult Center

See "Tim McLoone's Notes From the Road" on Page 14 about the generous staff of Passaic County Elks Adult Center

UMDNJ
UNIVERSITY OF MEDICAL DENTIST OF NEW JERSEY

University Behavioral HealthCare Christopher Kosseff
President & CEO

Tim McLoone
Holiday Express
968 Shrewsbury Avenue
Tinton Falls, NJ 07724

Dear Tim,

For the 12th year in a row, your group has brought wonder and delight to the holiday season at University Behavioral HealthCare (UBHC). Our patients lead extremely challenging lives. They suffer deprivation due to their chronic illness, and they are among the most disadvantaged members of our society. Each year your group manages to create a unique event where the patients are able to experience pure entertainment and joy, and each individual is made to feel special.

Your volunteers are not only very talented musicians and singers, but they bring a wonderful spirit to each year's performance. Even our most withdrawn patients are pulled into the fun. It is such a pleasure to see them clap, sway to the music and even sing and dance. This year we included patients from the child and adolescent unit, and it was amazing to see the event's appeal to all ages. The children and adults all had a wonderful time.

I also want to be sure to thank you for the gifts that you bring each year. Your donors and volunteers are an amazing group. We are so grateful that they are able to provide a gift bag for all who attend the event and even gift bags for patients at our Newark, Monmouth Junction and Cherry Hill facilities. In addition to these individual patient gifts, you have always given very generous donations of equipment for the programs.

We are all so fortunate that you had the vision to create these wonderful events. We feel very grateful each year to be on your list of performances!

Sincerely,

Christopher Kosseff
President and CEO
UMDNJ-University Behavioral HealthCare

From: "Room 6"

"You gave us the best Christmas gift ever! We loved all of your special gifts, but the most important one was the LOVE you gave to us on that special day. From the bottom of our hearts, we thank you!"

Gateway School
60 HIGH STREET • GARDEN CITY, NEW YORK 11530 • TEL: 516-466-4000 FAX: 516-466-4001
AFFILIATED WITH HANOVER SCHOOL, ETON COLLEGE, LALPHIN SCHOOL, LANARCA COLLEGE

Holiday Express
ATTN: Mr. Tim McLoone, President
968 Shrewsbury Avenue
Tinton Falls, NJ 07724

Dear Mr. McLoone,

The Gateway School students and staff wanted to express our sincere and heart-felt gratitude for bringing each of us such a wonderful and magical day on December 17 when Holiday Express performed here at our school. Last year was our first concert from your organization and in truth I never thought we could match that amazing show. But I was wrong! This year's production was just as electric and really took on a life of its own!

The whole school participated in the celebration which is pretty amazing considering the students range in age from 6-21, and represent a variety of disabling conditions. The food, the presents, the wonderful music, the singing and dancing were all outstanding. The truth of the matter is that for many of our students, your show here was the highlight of their Christmas season.

We know that nearly all of your efforts are contributed gratis and we would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of your volunteers for their generosity. We praise and admire your tremendous endeavors throughout the New Jersey area during the holidays that we have read about frequently in the local newspapers. You bring the true spirit of the holiday season to so many individuals who are typically ignored and even devalued by today's society. Watching our students singing and dancing their hearts out was absolutely priceless! We hope that you will be able to squeeze us in again next holiday season.

Especially this year when there has been so much turmoil in the economy and throughout the world, it was refreshing and uplifting to take a day off to celebrate the season with Santa McLoone and his awesome helpers.

Thanks again for everything,

Christopher Hoye, ED.D./Principal

Dear Holiday Express,
I received your gift bag and I really appreciate you coming.
My favorite gift was the CD. I really appreciate you coming.
your friend,
Soliah

written 12/22/08
Dec. 5, 2008

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH
100 WEST ST. TINTON FALLS, NJ 07724
TEL: 732-251-1000 FAX: 732-251-1001
www.stjohns-church.org

Christmas 2008

Dear Amy and Colleagues,

"So this is Christmas, and what have you done?"

Yes, what have you done? You have comforted the most helpless: men, women, and children who are hungry, homeless; those who are ill, both mentally and physically; those who have lost hope.

You ask nothing of them, and you give so generously. Thanks you for all you do for St. John's, and all whom we serve.

"A very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Let's hope it's a good one, without any fear."

Peace

Barbara Maran
Pastoral Associate/Apostolates

P.S. With our thanks to John Lennon for his soulful "Happy Christmas (War is Over)"



A SPECIAL RED T-SHIRT

by Loren Lewin

It's just a red long-sleeved t-shirt
That was given to me
But it's very important
As you will soon see

On its chest are two words
That say "Holiday Express"
They stand for what's important
Bringing people hope, joy and happiness

I used to watch the angels perform
From the audience every year
But 2008 is different
Because I decided to help them spread their good cheer

The first time was in Asbury
With kids' parents far away
A little boy with a hug then whispered to me,
"Did your mommy die?"... what could I say?

Then there was Wykoff
Some with minds drifting far away,
Many in the audience sat trapped in their bodies
But to the music they were able to sway

At the bagel shop in the morning on the way to the bus that day,
I took off my coat to proudly display
My red t-shirt, whose right to wear I was earning
By helping to improve the lot of others and make their days less yearning

I've done lots of volunteer work
In schools, synagogue, town and others; all worthwhile
But nothing's as meaningful and moving
As being right there with those who rarely have a reason to smile

I'm proud this year's running around
Serving food, dancing, singing and all that it provides
Has given me the right to wear
One of the red T-shirts and all it symbolizes

2008 is an important year
As my husband and I proudly joined HoEx
Spreading warmth, friendship and joy
To those we otherwise would never have met

So now I wake up every day
With a smile on my face
No matter what's in store at work
My mind's in another place

I think about amazing Tim
And all the other talented musicians
On the road once again
Performing their noble missions

And knowing that my small part
Helps out once in a while
Brings me enormous satisfaction
And a great big Holiday Express smile

On to Vineland and Newark
The next week will bring
Even more important reasons
For our hearts to sing

It's humbling to realize
One man's dream for holiday cheer
Can affect the lives of the needy
As well as all who volunteer

Loren Lewin wrote this meaningful poem about her very own red T-Shirt after participating at her first two events.

Sharon Kitley
and friend
Laraine Gaunt,
adorned with
scarves and hats
at St. John's
Soup Kitchen on
Christmas Eve



The Scarf Project

by Laraine Gaunt

I have been a Holiday Express volunteer for about 8 years. I talked about the experiences so much, my husband, Ned, joined me the second year.

We had known Tim and his music and were so happy that we could be involved, even though we had no musical talent. Although we have done some work in the warehouse and have helped with Dinner Dances and the Clambake, most of our involvement has been volunteering at the client events. It has become our Christmas and has changed how we feel about the holiday.

Our married children live in Connecticut and Montana with their families. They cannot get involved directly, but they truly understand what Holiday Express means to us. Our Montana daughter and her husband have made financial donations to Holiday Express in our honor; and, several years ago, our son-in-law filled in for me on Christmas Eve at St. John's – in the rain! One year, along with their baby, they also went directly from the airport to the concert at Count Basie. Our Connecticut family has attended several Tree Lighting events in Red Bank and our grandson, Sawyer, thinks Tim is a rock star!

The idea of knitting scarves for volunteers came last season when I was talking to Maureen Staub about all the things we individually buy to decorate ourselves to bring the spirit to our clients – earrings, hats, scarves, pins and more. I knit and belong to a group called the Knit Wits, who have donated baskets of yarn and knitted items for the Holiday Express auctions. We are all grandmothers and love to knit for our grandkids, but we also like to do special projects. It started with them and I have reached out to other people who knit. Each scarf also has a card that thanks people for volunteering and gives the name of the knitter.

This has been another way to network for Holiday Express. I would like to be able to have more scarves for next season, so I really need help. It's an ambitious project, but I hope well worth the endeavor.

Here's my favorite story from this experience! On the bus for A. Harry Moore this past season, I passed a bag of scarves around and let people know they were welcome to take a scarf if they wanted one to wear that day, and then keep it for the season. Jeannie Westendorf took one and told me she loved it. I explained to her that the particular scarf she picked was special because it was made by my good friend who happens to have Parkinson's Disease; and that it takes her a long time to finish just one scarf. Jeannie was touched by this because her mother also has Parkinson's. Then at the Wrap Party Jeannie wanted to know my friend's address because she had made her a special gift. Holiday Express touches more people than we know!

If anyone is interested in participating in the Scarf Project, please call me at 732-842-4873 or email at egaunt3@verizon.net. I have extra yarn if anyone needs it and I am encouraging people to recycle extra yarn they may have stored away.

IN THE BEGINNING...

by Kathleen Robinson

I believe it was early in the summer of 1997 that my brother-in-law Tim McLoone asked if I would attend a meeting pertaining for a non-profit organization that he had started a couple of years earlier. I had actually met Tim in the late seventies at various clubs in the area, and always enjoyed his music and his silly manner!

I had been living in New York City for ten years and then moved back to Middletown, where I had spent my childhood. I had worked in the corporate interior's industry, and volunteered in fundraising as my avocation. I was working with a non-profit organization called Children's Aid Society, and was an active member of the Associates Council. It was a large Manhattan organization with a hefty budget and a full-time staff. We were used to planning large events at The Big Apple Circus and The Museum of Natural History to name two! I gained a lot of experience over the years in organizing large events.

Tim approached me because of my experience, as well as my passion, for fundraising and volunteering. My mother, Mary T. Robinson, had instilled in me (and my ten brothers and sisters), the value of giving back to the community and I wanted to do something in Monmouth County. I had always loved music and dancing, Holiday Express was a good fit! All of my brothers and sisters, and some of my brothers- and sisters-in-law continue to be involved today.

My first meeting with the small group Tim gathered together was interesting, to say the least! I remember approximately ten of us from different professions sitting at a table at McLoone's Rum Runner. This group needed a logo, mission statement, money and more volunteers... just for starters!

Tim had a vision and was very optimistic that we could get this fundraising arm of his organization off the ground quickly! I was extremely surprised that when Tim asked if I would coordinate a black tie event (we called it "Holiday Finest" for the attire), I had agreed thinking I had at least a year and a few months. When Tim said November, I didn't realize he meant of 1997! In addition, he was hoping for approximately 400 people!



The first Dinner Dance – Caryn McCann, Beth and Tim McLoone, Kathleen Robinson, Diane Kilzen

I had to work fast! With Tim's vision and connections, we worked vigorously to pull this off! The first Holiday Express Dinner Dance was held at The Shore Casino in Atlantic Highlands on November 30, 1997. I think that the final head count was 401 people! We established a name for ourselves, made some money and had a great time! A lot of underprivileged individuals had a wonderful holiday season that year because of the generosity of so many people in our community.

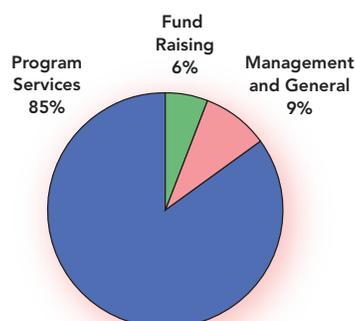
During the early years of Holiday Express, I was primarily involved with fundraising and volunteering at some events. Currently, I am not as involved as I once was because of my full-time job at Knoll, Inc., an international company that manufactures high-end furnishings for the commercial interiors market – and raising my spirited seven-year-old girl, Tessa, with my husband, David French.

One of my most memorable Holiday Express moments was at my favorite venue, The Center, in Asbury Park. My husband and I had donated a new children's bike for one of the raffle prizes. A young boy came up to me with several tickets and said that he was putting all of his tickets in the container for the bike, so he could win it for his sister. He told me that she wouldn't be getting much of anything for Christmas that year. My first thought was to "fix" it so that he would win. I knew in my heart that wasn't fair so I didn't do it... and guess what, he won without my help! I was so overjoyed seeing the look on that boy's face when his ticket number was called that I openly (and uncontrollably) wept for joy! After that, every event reminded me of how easy it is to give back and how blessed I am every day!

Holiday Express Financial Information

Holiday Express, Inc. is a non-profit, registered 501(c)(3) organization, with a mission to deliver music, food, gifts, financial support and friendship to those with the greatest need for the gift of human kindness during the holiday season and throughout the year. Contributions to Holiday Express, Inc. are deductible for Federal tax purposes.

For the fiscal year ending April 30, 2008, Holiday Express Inc.'s support and revenue totaled \$1,559,099. Of that amount 85% was available to support the organization's mission. Fund-raising costs for the year were 6% of total income and 9% of income went to Management and General.



Think Green – Join Our Email List

In an effort to do our part for the environment we are asking our members and supporters to send us their email addresses.

As we expand the Holiday Express electronic data base, we can reduce the environmental impact from excess paper and save money. An added benefit – we can reach all of you with important announcements on upcoming events.

Three easy ways to sign up!

1. Go to www.holidayexpress.org
 - scroll to the bottom of the home page
 - enter your email address and click "Go"
2. Send an email to: holidayexpress@comcast.net from the email address you want used
3. Call the Holiday Express office at 732-544-8010

Help us reach you! Don't miss exciting Holiday Express events and important announcements.

Perceptions from General Volunteers

Greetings from "Young" Tim!

There is a good chance you've seen me around at a few Holiday Express events this past season. I was the one wearing the Holiday Express shirt. Not enough? I also wore a Santa hat. Still don't remember me? I usually wore either a pair of green Converse All-Stars or a pair of Converse All-Stars with Christmas lights on them. Give up? Well I'm Tim Borden and perhaps I was often the youngest volunteer, so I don't really know how you missed me.



I'm nineteen years old and from Marlboro. I'm currently in my second year at Brookdale Community College. I'm graduating with an AA in Business Administration come May 2009, at which point I'll be high-tailing it out of here for college next year. Even though I will be away at college next season, I'll be back to volunteer with Holiday Express as much as I can. Please let me tell you why.

I first fell in love with the infatuation that is Holiday Express when I was a boy. Every weekend on the radio in my house, and in my parent's car, "the music would come out to play" on NJ 101.5, and in December the hits of Holiday Express became the sound track of the season. I can also remember being a little kid and watching the tree lighting at Rockefeller Center on TV. The handful of appearances that Holiday Express made during those shows really left a lasting impression.

This year I got the urge to do something different instead of setting up Christmas decorations, upon Christmas decorations, upon Christmas decorations (*my Mom's intense!*). I work for Avis Rent-A-Car, you might have seen the big box trucks at Holiday Express events that say Avis? Yeah, I rent those. I have also known the

Staub Family for several years and they are part of Holiday Express, so I asked about it back in October and signed up for some fun. My Mom, Debbie, was inspired by this re-dedicated Christmas spirit and tagged along to several events. My dad and my girlfriend ended up getting the bug and volunteered at a few events too.

As a first-year groupie, I signed up to do well, whatever. I floated around and did several things at different events and fit into all of them fairly well. Some events I helped with food and drinks; others I did set up and break down. I think I tried everything except face painting. There is "no Grinching way" that I can do face painting. If you've ever seen my handwriting, you would know why. Some kid might ask for a Christmas tree and he would end up with something that looked more like the Grinch if he got beat by that thirty-nine and a half foot pole, and then got run over by the Holiday Express bus. It's that bad.

Mostly I stuck to dancing. Not that I could do that either, but neither can some other volunteers, so I was okay about it. It was good to dance with people and get them to enjoy themselves more – and I was so bad that it always managed to evoke some smiles and laughs. Mission accomplished.

The best thing that I did was wearing a costume. I first got to be Elmo at the Alpha School. Let me put that into perspective for you. Me, the world's biggest eight-year-old at heart, got to dress up as the childhood hero for every kid, dance around, interact and distribute an enormous amount of hugs to kids with learning disabilities. The words to explain what that experience was like do not even exist; all I will say is that, for me, it is the most rewarding job Holiday Express has to offer.

So why would I do this? Why would I dedicate the time to go with people that I have never met, to places that I have never been before, to help people who are neglected by some for their very existence? Why would a nineteen year-old full time student even consider this?

Well, It was all a ploy to buddy up to Santa Claus so he would FINALLY bring me an official Red Ryder carbine-action 200-shot range model air rifle with a compass in the stock, and this thing which tells time. A Christmas present which I have wanted for a long time; but that's another story. Nah, just kidding, I don't really want one of those. I would probably shoot my eye out anyway.

However, helping others is not underappreciated, nor do you ever forget about it. It stays forever in the hearts of those you helped, not to mention your own heart. Helping others is not something that is underappreciated like another Christmas sweater – its reach extends beyond that which we can see. It touches hearts and minds in old and young, feeble and agile, sick and poor, and the shockwaves of the Holiday Express love train send cheers throughout the world that last the year through and influence the future for years to come.

They say it's the thought that counts when it comes to Christmas presents, but if we all truly thought about it and believed in it, the lines at the mall would be much shorter and the lines at the soup kitchens would move much quicker because we would all be volunteers. Those who don't believe in Santa Claus, well they've just never met someone from Holiday Express.

I can't wait for the Christmas in July tour. What? There is no Christmas in July tour? Bummer! Oh well, next December can't come soon enough then. God bless every one of you.

Mr. Scott the Music Man, Mom Debbie and Tim, Tina Feibusch and little Elf guests at Eva's Village.





Sue Wilson Walks the Dog



I happened to be in just the right place, at just the right time, on just the right day. That's how my Holiday Express experience started. I'm new in town, and along with my puppy "Annie" (five pounds of fluff and cuteness), I moved close to the beach for the winter to see if this is the place I want to plant my feet. I have two wonderful children who, much to my joy and dismay, are getting along just fine without me managing every twist and turn. My daughter is a copywriter in NYC and my son a Marine helicopter pilot still in training.

Annie has been my meet and greet committee of one. Every time we walk we get hellos and smiles and nice chats with neighbors. On one of these walks I met Jill Weiss, also walking a pup. One subject led to another, and when she found out that I was new to the area, she smiled and said, "I have two excellent recommendations for you – Sickles Market and Holiday Express." She explained each one and said that she knew for a fact that Holiday Express needed people in the warehouse immediately. I called Amy Robinson and the next day I made my way to the warehouse – within minutes I was introducing myself, packing bags and listening to songs that would stay with me for the next two months!!! ("Nobody ought to be alone on Christmas" ... stayed in my head until the end of January.)

I went to the warehouse several days a week, and decided that I needed to find out where these bags were going. I signed up for a few events and soon found myself in Staten Island at Special Olympics. It was spectacular to see the show for the first time and watch the magic that happens both to the guests and to all the volunteers who pull it together. Everyone lends a talent and every talent is needed.

Since my son is a Marine, nothing was going to keep me away from Asbury Park Convention Hall and the event for the families of National

Guard troops. I also had the pleasure of going to Harbor School and Eva's Village. While the energy at the events is happy and fun, there were a couple of times I couldn't hold tears back. When Amy Broza sang "God Bless America" at the Convention Hall and Delores Holmes sang "I Believe I Can Fly" at Eva's Village, I had tears in my eyes simply for the beauty of the moment. There was no place in the world that I would rather have been.

What I like best about Holiday Express is the purity of the concept. It is simply two hours of sunshine and music, good food and cheer for those who need it most. I've never seen happier volunteers or happier concert goers. For the past 14 years. I have spent a significant amount of time working for the American Red Cross. As much as I believe in the mission and work of the Red Cross, and will continue to train as a volunteer, it is in essence always preparing for disaster. What a wonderful change of pace it has been to prepare for a rock and roll show! When my daughter found out I was traveling to an event on the bus with the band, and I wore my Holiday Express shirt with the tour dates, I saw a whole new level of respect for me when she said, "Mom, you are finally a roadie."

This was probably one of the most meaningful holiday seasons that I have spent in memory. And, along the way, I met wonderful people, had lots of fun whether at the warehouse or at an event, and felt really good about giving my time. I truly believe that when you give your time for something worthwhile, you always receive more than you give. Holiday Express is a great example of that. I watched very talented and kind people work together and saw pure joy on people's faces when they danced, sang with the music, got a hand tattoo or made a craft. It is an organization I am proud to have worked with and I very much look forward to next year!

Lynn Humphrey – Ace Volunteer!

My volunteering for Holiday Express began in 2007 in the warehouse putting together gift bags. In 2008, my first event was at the Sgt. Pat's Run. Then I was on the Clambake Committee. Next thing I knew, it was time for the Events Manager's Meeting and there I was once again. I raised my hand to be Assistant Event Manager at two events. I also managed to attend about eight other events.

I find all the events fun and unique in their own way, my favorite being the Disco Santas. It also absolutely tickles me when everyone joins in on the *Twelve Days of Christmas*. I am somewhat shy, yet I find myself moving, dancing, clapping and even singing to the fabulous tunes and interacting with the "guests." It is so delightful to see client's smiling and getting up and dancing themselves. I talk about Holiday Express to each and everyone I meet!

My early life was a roller coaster. I raised my son, and bounced around a lot to make ends meet. I am an alcoholic and took my last drink on July 5, 1998, the same year I was diagnosed with AIDS. Everything is going well now; my T-cells are up and my diagnosis is HIV+. I am finally settled into my own apartment; and, even though it tends to get messy because my activities keep me so busy, it's mine and I love it!

My son is grown and we have a much better relationship. I have a beautiful granddaughter, Sonrisa, whom I care for three days a week. I have three brothers and two sisters, along with 5 nieces and 5 nephews – I'm hoping to get them involved in Holiday Express too!

I produce a web site that informs people about events in Monmouth County. I post events at no charge and offer no advertising. My reward is knowing I have provided something fun to do for someone. It gives me great joy when a reader writes to tell me how much they enjoy my web site. (<http://www.bizeturtle.com>)

I am involved with Synergy: Singles in Community Service; plus I am a member and on the Board of Directors for Clearwater of NJ, an environmental organization. I also volunteer at Scan Learning Center, Life-Long Education for the 50+ Generation; and finally, I am a Road to Recovery Driver for the American Cancer Society.

Sonrisa (inset), Lynn and son, Jason



Perceptions from the Band

Bruce Gassman On Accordion

I am positive that what I'm about to say has been said many times; but I will say it anyway – without hesitation, this was my most rewarding holiday season since my kids were little and still believed in Santa Claus and the Hanukkah Fairy. There, I've said it! Having known Tim McLoone for more decades than he and I would admit, and after a *short* break (fifteen years) in my musical career, it was time to find a way to give rather than receive. What better way than Holiday Express.

But wait. I'm an accordion player and why would I think Holiday Express would want an accordion player? So what that I won a national music scholarship through the Boys Clubs of America at the age of 13 and, on weekends, studied with Maestro Joseph Biviano from Columbia University all through high school. So what that I was the youngest member ever admitted to the national renowned orchestra, the Accordion Symphony Society of New York at the age of 15. So what that I toured the Midwest with The Escorts, Doc & the MDs and The Broadway Clique for four years while in college. So what if I was part of the early Jersey Shore rock scene jamming at The Student Prince, Pandemonium and The Upstage and was the original keyboard player (Hammond B-3 & Fender Rhodes piano) for the very popular cover band, Waterfront (the first rock band ever to play The Tradewinds). So what that I played more than 100 gigs a year with the Bruce Gassman Orchestra from 1975-1992. This is all ancient history and the only thing musical I'm doing now is performing with the Accordion Pops Orchestra. Not that this is a bad thing, but it is what it is.

Holiday Express is chockfull of talented, professional musicians who haven't had a 15-year musical sabbatical. In the history of Holiday Express, there has never been an accordion player (never had a tuba player either, but I heard they came close once). Not known for my shyness, I reached out to Tim and was invited to a kick-off meeting in October. There I was in a room full of volunteers and as Tim looked over at me, he announced "and there's Bruce Gassman, accordion player." As I prepared for the proverbial "Lady-of-Spain" jokes, the room did not burst out in laughter – whew!

Then came the audition. What do I play? I surely know lots of Christmas (oops, Holiday) music, but what else; Beatles; Motown;

Ethnic; Jazz; No, I'll play something a little more difficult (light classical) to display my technical ability. Then Tim, in a way that only Tim can, says "Oh sure, make us all feel bad that none of us studied classical music."

I did not hear back from anyone for a week, so I e-mailed to "just check in," thinking the whole time that playing "Dance of the Comedians" by Bedrich Smetana from the opera "The Bartered Bride" was definitely not a good move. But as fate would have it, Tim did reach out and invited me to a rehearsal and the rest, as they say, is history (or is it)?

Now I had to fit an accordion in with Rick's horn section, Jim's guitar players, Amy's group of vocalists, and a killer rhythm section while making sure not to step on Tim's piano parts; and, at the same time, try to keep the "Beer Barrel Polka" comments in check.

I'm astounded by the coordination of volunteers behind the scenes, the commitment each and every one has to the mission and the overwhelming community support – if only government could take a lesson from Holiday Express. My first-year memories are many. Some of the faces in the audience have left a lasting impression – some good and some heartbreaking. Watching physically and mentally challenged people explode with joy while they dance and sing, and knowing that tomorrow will be a very different day for them, takes you through a litany of emotions. And of course there are the children – oh my. You wish you could just take them home, click your heels together and all would be right with their world. The current economic situation is nothing in comparison to their current situation. You see, the economy will eventually get better.

I want to thank Santa and Mrs. Claus, the Grinch, Frosty, Rudolph, the Holiday Express Dancers, all the volunteers (especially Donna), the musicians and the vocalists for making my first year with Holiday Express the ultimate experience. Like everyone else, I'm already counting the days until Thanksgiving. To Tim: You sir are in every sense of the word, a Gentleman (in Yiddish – a Mensch). There is surely (but not too soon), a special place in heaven for you. When that time comes and the bus is leaving for the next show, please allow this very lucky accordionist to be on board.



(front) Lee Sanderson, Tommy LaBella, Ed Manion, Rick Brunermer; (back) John Martin, Jerry Pashin



(front) Tim McLoone surrounded by singers including Melissa Chill, BethAnn Clayton, Valerie Webb, Hollis Cooper



(front) Jeannie Westendorf, Amy Broza, Tarika Jean-Pierre; (middle) Valerie Webb, Melissa Chill, Pam Minson, Katie Bordiuk, Linda Chorney, (back) Alan Grant, Joe Petillo, Sue Kiley, Jessica Juliano, Byron Smith



Jerry Pashin On Trumpet

The Holiday Express season is brief but intense, and seems to fly by. I know in February I will have Holiday Express withdrawal and get urges to drive to Exit 109 just to park my car at the Marriott!

Prior to the start of this past tour, I would often wear my Holiday Express hat, especially on bad hair days, and usually get questioned by a few curious folks. I gave a reply in the time and space allowed, be it in a store, at a basketball game or in a parking lot – saying that Holiday Express is a group of volunteers who contribute their time, talent and resources to bring cheer and some happiness during the holiday season to those who are in need of it. I told them that the organization delivers music, food and gifts to those much less fortunate who reside in hospitals, special need facilities and also soup kitchens. I gave them the website address so they could find out more. Later I thought that my general description was satisfactory for the moment. Then I realized that my description was simplistic.

Holiday Express is a community of individuals from all walks of life. Each contributes in his or her way to help brighten the holiday season for those in need, tirelessly and without self interest. At times the positive energy can be overwhelming. From the performers on stage to the support staff working behind the scenes, every bit of effort is full throttle.

Holiday Express has given me a more realistic perspective on life. I have learned to appreciate things I had taken for granted in the past. I was fortunate to be a part of the band as Holiday Express journeyed to New Orleans and Mississippi to lend moral support and entertain those who had been hit by the hurricanes. It was far worse than anything shown on TV or in a newspaper. The difference between the Gulf residents and us



Horn players: Lee Sanderson, Jerry Pashin, Rick Brunermer

is luck. When my basement flooded one night in the middle of the tour, somehow it did not seem all that terrible when I remembered the devastation I had witnessed in New Orleans.

"I'm no hero that's understood, all the redemption I can offer" is what's in this trumpet case (thanks Boss). The real heroes are the caregivers and the teachers who work with the patients and students on a day-to-day basis. Working with the kids and more severe adult cases takes a special kind of person. Their compassion and dedication are extraordinary. After each show we board the bus and return to our homes. The audience members at special needs facilities remain. Those who work with them on a daily basis are indeed heroes.

To quote Rick Brunermer, "Every show is special." This is what keeps us, as performers, fresh and even spontaneous to a degree. In my four seasons with Holiday Express I have played many shows and I find I always learn. There is always that need to excel and reach higher. Did I mention that we have fun too? And we all look out for each other. It is always relaxed yet professional.

Before becoming a member, I interviewed Tim McLoone for a local newspaper. I found him to be a visionary. He not only saw a need to reach out into the community to bring caring during the holiday season to those who need it, but he found the ways to implement it. His infectious enthusiasm touches everyone in the organization, and I believe that everyone shares his vision. That is why we are here. Grinches beware!

I don't want to rush my year, but I cannot wait for the next tour. It's a healthy kind of addiction. Thanks to all for your support.

Arne Wendt On Keyboard

Years ago, I met Ralph Notaro, Holiday Express vocalist, and he told me about the organization, but I was working full-time. Since then I voluntarily left the corporate world to follow my path in life and be a professional musician. Along the way I've been playing with Alan Grant, and he always praised the band and organization, so I decided I wanted to be a part of it. During 2008, my first season, I played 19 shows with Holiday Express. I am the second keyboardist in the band.

When initial rehearsals started in October, I immediately noticed how happy everyone was to see each other and get back into the spirit of giving their time to this organization. That spoke volumes to me. The whole experience of working with these people (some whose names I still don't know) under these auspices has been very unique and special.

Going to the various places and seeing how the patients and clients reacted to the event was very touching and enlightening. Of course, playing with some amazing musicians on some of the swankier stages (NJ PAC, Count Basie, Blythedale) was a blast!

I am Jersey born and bred, and the youngest of six from a musical family, so I started listening to the "right" stuff very early on.

Have keyboards, will travel

Besides piano, I also sing a bit, play bass and some guitar – throw something at me and I'll find a way to make music with it! I play and record music with a multitude of musicians, some more high-profile than others but all very inspiring to me. I also have co-produced a couple of commercial sound tracks with my friend Alan Grant, and my keyboard playing can be heard on a TV show here and there and at least one major motion picture. I've also written articles for Keyboard Magazine and programmed synthesizers for Moog Music, Bernie Worrell and others.



First Annual Sunset Clambake
 (1) Tom DeFelice, Susan Belfer
 (2) Margaret Mass, Valerie Schiafone,
 Kathy Severini, Kathy Pier (3) Diane Ciallella,
 Tony & Erin Perruso,
 Meredith Tierney
 (4) Trudy & Charlie
 Parton (5) Robert &
 Pat Spencer, Phil &
 Marilyn Perricone
 (6) Numa Saisselin,
 Tim & Beth McLoone,
 Laurie Costanzo
 (7) Scott & Krista
 Newbert (8) Mary
 Ann Larkin with sister Carol Stillwell
 (9) Bob Boyd, Tony Cosentino
 (10) Clambake Chair, Kathie Sterzinar,
 Christine Mosher, Christina Liccardi

Season 2008

Face Painting at Events
 Children of all ages delight in this craft. (1) Jeannie Cosentino,
 (2) Gary Cooper, and (3) Mark
 Reuter enjoy one-on-one
 time with guests while face
 painting. (4) At the National
 Guard event at Convention
 Hall, volunteer Sara Lepis
 shows off famous Asbury
 Park icon "Tillie," painted
 on her cheek.



Let the Good Times Rock 'n' Roll!

(1) Amy Broza trying on the Olympic Gold (2) Mark Murphy croons a tune (3) Tim leads the band at Straight & Narrow (4) Bruce Gassman (5) Mike Mahoney's Elvis (6) Tim McLoone and Joe Petillo rock with our tiniest guest dancer at the NJ National Guard event (7) Kathy Severini, Jeanne Westendorf, Joe Petillo & Pam Minson raise their hands for School for Children (8) Amy Broza, Jeanne Westendorf, Melissa Chill, Jessica Juliano at Count Basie (9) Mayor Pasquale Menna sings with Karen Credle at the Red Bank Town Lighting (10) Melissa Chill meets her dancin' match with a young guest at the NJ National Guard event (11) The one and only Bobby Bandiera (12) Hollis Cooper at Count Basie (13) BethAnn Clayton leads the band at Norman A. Bleshman Regional Day School (14) At Count Basie Delores Holmes brings it on home (15) Our sound guys, Jack Koza, TJ Essig, Chris DiStefano, Mike (Elvis) Mahoney



Our Many Characters
 (1) Disco Santas at Red Bank Town Lighting (2) All the children adore Mrs. Claus, Diane Kilzen (3) Our biggest ham, the always-photogenic Grinch (4) Gateway School Disco Santa (5) Tom Minson takes time from drumming to visit with two of his grandchildren and Cookie Monster (6) Kathryn Barnett Dancers on stage at Count Basie (7) The Mayor of Shrewsbury, Terel Cooperhouse morphs into "Santa/Grinch" (8) The "characters" awaiting their cue (9) We served these yummy custom Holiday Express cakes to lots of our guests in 2008 (10) Frosty (11) Maureen McCrink warms up to Elmo at the Red Bank Town Lighting



Volunteers Galore

(1) Doug & Amy Robinson DeHays had a splendid 2008! They eloped in Cape May and welcomed son Alex (2) Jane Denny, Donna Edgington (3) Kathy Moyer & Rick Valentine (4) Judith Reuter & daughter, Lindsay (5) Linda Cohen with Amelia DePaula & Elizabeth Brown, granddaughters of Eileen & Sam Vilardi, (6) Marilee Celestino, Joan Mercer (7) Dottie Cooper, Patti Delaney (8) Fred Mueller, winner of the 2008 Crystal Star Award - and our bus driver (9) Michael Staub (10) Rich Spahr (11) Helen Doyle with Rose Walter of Woodbridge Development Center (12) Marylynn Hawkins & daughter Michelle Boragi (13) Cousins Craig Pignataro & Greg Pignataro - Greg is the son of Don! (14) Peter DeMarco (15) Board of Trustees Members Jeff Fraller, Paul Huegel (16) Gary & Dottie Cooper (17) Marylynn Hawkins, Christina Liccardi, Patti Delaney (18) Alex Johnson & Heather Robinson (19) Elf Sherry Henderson (20) Ann Robinson (21) Kathie Sterzinar with nephew Bryan, Patti Delaney, Christina Liccardi (22) Amy Robinson DeHays, Donna Chapski of Sickles Market, Christine Mosher, Christina Liccardi (23) Reindeer Jill Weiss snuggles with infant son of a NJ National Guard family



A Few of Our Friends

(1) The Bonnie Brae Knights Drum Corps were selected to march in President Obama's Inaugural Parade (2) CVR clients and staff (3) Annie Soriano from Friends House with husband Ron & son Giovanni (4) Sue Wilson welcomes COL Nicholas Chimenti & CSM Jerome Jenkins of the NJ National Guard (5) BG Frank Dulfer, Amy Robinson DeHays, COL James Grant (6) Stephanie Faith, a student at School For Children (7) Guest Darnell sings annually with Tim and the band



Tim McLoone's No

North Jersey Developmental Center

This was our seventh event of the season, and the second on this day. We were no sooner back from Passaic CP then an hour later we were right back on this bus. Of course, we knew a very enthusiastic dancing crowd was waiting for us – and they did not disappoint.

Our long-time supporters, Frank and Linda Belmont, were there as Giving Partners for the event (they brought a 42" flat screen along with other items) and they stood right behind the band most of the evening. It seemed like every time I looked over, Linda was crying. I think we are now so used to what we do and see, that we aren't as affected by the small moments like we used to be when it was all new.

The staff here was also so nice. The head dietician prepared sandwich and snack platters for us which we totally didn't expect. They've got a challenging group on their hands and I don't know how they come back every day. These are adults with a wide variety of disorders but, boy, did they dance and sing. It was great.

Medallion Care, Passaic County Elks Adults, Staten Island Special Olympics

This was a rough day logistically as we had two simultaneous events out of the same bus. We off-loaded the Medallion group and continued on to our Elks CP folks. It was stunning. Almost everyone was in a wheelchair and it was clear that, in many cases, these were people with the most extreme of disabilities. But the staff there is very loving and organized (and big HoEx fans) and gave us a shocker at the end of the day. I'm not sure this has happened any other time in our nearly 600 events, but the staff took up collections and presented us with an envelope with over \$800 in cash and a pile of blankets, gloves, and other warm items for us to distribute throughout our season. Are you kidding me?

The Medallion group was served a meal from McLoone's at Favorites with the staff from that restaurant coming to participate as well. All reports were that this was a great success.

Later that evening, yet another busload of HoExers set out for Staten Island to party with the Special Olympians there. It's a big, big crowd and they really like to dance and sing with the band.

An incredible amount of credit has to go to our office staff and warehouse crew for getting all the supplies organized, making sure everything went to the right place. And Jim Celestino, Amy Broza and Rick Brunermer rallied enough performers to have three different full bands.

Whew! Only 43 events to go!

School for Children, Norman A. Blesman Regional Day School, Bonnie Brae

Yet another challenging triple header!

The School for Children is in nearby Eatontown and, again, deals with "special needs" children. What a spectacular place! Rich and Wendy Murphy were there both as volunteers but also as part of the Giving Partners from Citi Smith Barney.

All the volunteers were great at this one, jumping right into their elf outfits and really having a terrific time. There can't be a place more psyched by a HoEx appearance than this one. It was raucous from the beginning and it was great to be in a place that allows its pupils to just enjoy themselves so thoroughly without being told what to do or how to behave. It was just so natural... and loving. The Disco Santas, made up of staff members, were really funny and the kids had a ball.

All reports from the first-time Blesman event reported more of the same. It's still amazing that we could turn out so many volunteers on a weekday like this.

Bonnie Brae was quite the place to be for the third event of the day (and eighth in the last three days). This is a facility that houses, educates and provides intensive therapy (both

Patti Delaney dances with a client at Norman A. Blesman Regional Day School

Tim with students from Gateway School



Notes From the Road, written by Tim McLoone during the bus rides home from several 2008 events, can easily evoke the feelings of having been there in person. We hope you enjoy reading about how Holiday Express fulfills our mission – no matter what – from Tim's personal and candid observations.

physical and mental) for roughly 80 teen-aged boys who, as they like to say at Bonnie Brae, "have failed to get there." It is the most heartbreaking place. A high percentage of these children, and that's what they are, have been sexually abused by a relative or other person of trust in their lives and this is kind of a "last chance" place for them to put their lives back together, or most of them would otherwise end up in the penal system on some level. And some will anyway but Bonnie Brae has had tremendous success with their program.

We probably doubt the success of this event more than any other we do since we are not exactly the hip-hop types, if you know what I mean. But, as so many of our members pointed out tonight, kids are kids, and after a while, they really got into it. The fearless Jeanne

Westendorf had a lot to do with that, performing the "Candles Burning Low..." thing with "Big Daddy," an incredibly charismatic counselor, who also sang a stirring version of "Lean on Me" with Byron Smith.

Meanwhile, when it looked like too many of our raffle gifts were aimed at a younger crowd, Terel Cooperhouse hit the local Radio Shack and returned with more goodies to give away. The "Twelve Days" had virtually the entire room involved and the Disco Santas were, again, a big hit.

At the end, I think Santa feared for his life, but it was a great party (Paul Diomedes' slush drinks nearly caused a stampede). We just all had to wonder as we were driving away, what becomes of these kids a few years from now... or even tomorrow?

Gateway School, Eva's Village

Today was another fascinating doubleheader. We started the day at the Gateway School, a place that does a wonderful job in caring for and educating young people with a wide range of special needs. More than 100 school-aged children participated in yet another raucous event and you had to be really impressed with the principal, "Chris (Kringle)," who is clearly so loving towards his charges. We had a really large band at this one and the kids were into it from the first notes. Our volunteers did a great job of setting up a buffet lunch and it all went so smoothly.

Nothing, however, could have prepared us for what followed at Eva's Village. Sister Gloria runs a remarkable facility that houses families, helps people with recovery from addiction, helps clients with job placement, etc. In Sister Gloria's world it literally "takes a village!" Rick Bott and Merri-Makers provided a first-class turkey dinner, while Tony Perruso's company, AG Edwards, who continue to be the Giving Partners for Eva's, brought other much needed gifts for the facility along with a small army of volunteers. We also arrived with a busload of HoEx volunteers, none of whom ever want to miss this evening!

The reception we receive here is overwhelming including what had to be the loudest "Twelve Days" ever. But the band was particularly happy that we were joined by Delores who has spent a year trying to recover from serious physical ailments of her own. Well, there she was belting out the tunes all night, but when she gave us her rendition of "I Believe I Can Fly," the whole room sang along and we were all tremendously moved by the moment. The power of music was never more evident and we truly wish the people at Eva's the best as they struggle to overcome their personal hardships.

What a day!

Straight & Narrow

Often it is our audience that gives so much more to us than we give to them. It was a truly weary group of volunteers that descended upon the Straight & Narrow group – nearly 400 recovering addicts – on a cold, snowy Sunday. This was event 48 out of 53 and we were definitely tiring down the stretch. The



The happy return of Delores Holmes



tes From the Road

tightly compacted schedule had yielded just too many "doubles" and even "triples" and we were pretty much spent. Plus, our previous experiences with people in recovery had not always gone over well. Many of them can be in physical "withdrawal" pain or just not ready to hear our happy little songs, particularly at Christmastime.

And so it came to pass that we straggled into an old warehouse, only to be greeted by a rambunctious roomful of spirited, mostly young people, many of them former military. It was crazy. Once they had their outside smoke break, chaos was the rule of the day. Those candles were burnin' low and there was even a choir singin' carols.

All the credit has to go to the wonderful people who run this organization to have helped instill such a joie de vivre in all of these otherwise mostly destitute people of all races, creeds, colors, ethnicities, all – well – of everything. It was a true "rainbow room." The Disco Santas turned out to be outright gymnasts and the "Twelve Days" was outrageously loud. The only event that rivaled it for volume and enthusiasm was Eva's Village (also in Paterson... hmmmmm).

We wrapped things up with "Lean On Me" and "Higher and Higher" (an ironic title for that room if there ever was one) but none of us really wanted to go. There were hugs all around and we really wished all of these folks success in the New Year. Father Lou who runs the program spoke to everyone of having just lost one of their members who had drifted off and died of an overdose on the street just a few days earlier, so we were more than aware of the personal battle these good people face every day.

And we were grateful to them for bringing us the "gift of human kindness."

St John's Soup Kitchen

Boy, did it rain. Talk about your biblical 40 days and 40 nights. And yet, the line snaked down and around the block. Our feisty volunteers were scrambling to hand out ponchos to everyone they could, dodging the snow banks and the traffic on Route 21. In this year of the financial meltdown, we knew it would be a big crowd, but you are still not prepared to see what that actually looks like.

Our tent could only hold 100 or so at a time, so it was a group of very wet and weary folks who finally got to sit down with a hot Christmas Eve meal. Hard to believe we used to hold this event outdoors – without a tent. Meanwhile, the parking lot where the tent was located was pitched down towards the band so there was a veritable river of water soaking the musicians' feet. We ended up standing on tables laid flat on the ground to avoid any electrical issues as over 700 of our brothers and sisters (and their children) streamed past like that same river.

But, as always, there was nothing like being at St John's where Holiday Express really began over 16 years earlier. We saw some familiar faces but some were missing as well. Where was Hoss? And some others had passed away since we had been there last; the reality of life – and death – in Newark.

At the same time, the other half of Holiday Express was with the Trinity group in Asbury Park, catering (quite literally) to another 400 people who were in need of a hot meal.

And then it was all over. Events number 624 and 625 ended Season 16. We were all almost too tired to laugh or cry at the enormity of it all.

Almost...

First-time event at Straight & Narrow – (1) Amy Broza with creator of our new fashion eyeglasses! (2) The little ones had big eyes for Elmo and Santa. (3) These young guys sure know how to rock! (4) Give these women a mike!



Season 2008 By The Numbers

53 Events Between Nov. 24 and Dec. 24

4 days had 3 events per day – 3 of those "triples" were in a row! 17 days had 2 events per day; 7 days were singles

4 Public Performances – Red Bank Town Lighting, NJPAC and 2 Count Basie Concerts

1300 Volunteers donated 6500 hours of their time

Warehouse

- Almost 850 people worked in the warehouse preparing for the events
- 35 youth organizations brought 500 kids
- 9 corporations helped with 160 adults
- 140 kids participated on their own
- 50 adults and seniors packed bags in the morning and afternoon

The volunteer "Elves" of "Grinchville" – as the warehouse is fondly called – are an essential part of the operation. Counting, organizing and sorting donations are daily activities. Personal care toiletry kits are assembled and are included in the gift bag with several other items. "Making" boxes, moving pallets, loading/unloading trucks and flattening cardboard occur daily behind the scenes. Each event is packed, labeled and shipped according to the schedule. Over 350,000 items pass through our 6,000 square foot warehouse during the season.

Events

- Each event had 25-30 volunteers
- There were always 15 or more musicians and singers, and often more than 25
- 15 or more "Elves," truck drivers and costumed characters were at each event
- The bus, truck and van logged over 2,000 miles
- More than 10,000 meals and drinks were served; sometimes subs or pizza and other times a hot buffet or a sit-down meal
- Thousands of faces painted, hands tattooed and glittering halos worn by enthusiastic guests
- Countless boos for the Grinch, hugs for Frosty, Elmo and Rudolph and wide-eyed smiles for Santa

Raffle Prizes

- We drew 300 raffle tickets for prizes at the events
- Most events had 6 to 8 raffles that included iPods, CD and DVD players, sports equipment, jerseys, toys, warm clothing and Wii systems
- These prizes were valued at more than \$10,000

Gift Bags

- More than 15,000 gift bags containing at least 10 items were hand-packed in the warehouse and handed out at the events. About 200,000 items are pulled from inventory and packed in the gift bags
- We gave bags to 8,500 men, 4,400 women and 2,300 kids
- These tote, duffle or backpack gift bags were valued at more than \$450,000

Giving Partners Program

- 55 organizations provided a "wish list" with requests ranging from below \$500 to more than \$50,000
- 31 Giving Partners fulfilled these wishes with items such as flat screen TVs, DVD camcorders, computers, software programs, Wii systems, kitchen equipment and special needs items
- These items were valued at more than \$25,000

HOLIDAY EXPRESS SEASON

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Special thanks to our 2008 Event Sponsors and Patrons for their generous support.

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SIXTH ANNUAL GOLF CLASSIC
JULY 21, 2008

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AND RED BANK TOWN LIGHTING
NOVEMBER 28, 2008

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NEW JERSEY PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
DECEMBER 10, 2008

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COUNT BASIE THEATRE
DECEMBER 16, 2008

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COUNT BASIE THEATRE
DECEMBER 18, 2008

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HOLIDAY EXPRESS PERFORMANCE AT
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DECEMBER 22, 2008

New York Mercantile Exchange

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Sickles Market

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in the lives of thousands of children and adults.*

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We are so grateful to the individuals, corporations, schools and other organizations who made financial, product and in-kind donations in support of Holiday Express this season. Every effort is made to acknowledge contributors correctly. Please accept our apology for any errors or omissions.

2008 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CLAMBAKE AND GOLF SPONSORS

We thank all those who support Holiday Express by attending our Clambake and Golf Classic; and an **extra** thanks to our Event Sponsors listed below, as well as those who contributed to the auctions and the ad journal.

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Subs for 5,000 Guests at 17 Events

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Favorites, Pier House,
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Meals for 1,500 Guests at 4 Events

Merri-Makers Caterers

Rick and Andy Bott
Meals for 900 Guests at 3 Events

Paul Diomede

Slushies at 10 Events

Red Bank Starbucks

Coffee and Hot Chocolate at 2 Events

Ronstan Paper and Packaging

Bill LaMorte
Paper products for the entire season

Salt Creek Grille

Steve Bidgood
Meals for 60 at an Event

Wakefern

Christine Magyarits
Water and Soda for all Events

Windmill

Steve Levine
Meals for 200 Guests at an Event

Continued on Page 18

(left) Paul Diomede and his slushies were a big hit with the kids; (center) Peter & John Cancro of Jersey Mike's sent their crew to serve; (right) Maureen & Mike Staub, with son Danny, provided an ice cream cart



SEASON 2008 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

GIFT BAG ITEMS

The Gift Bags we give out are an essential part of each event. Many places we visit tell us the gift bag we give to their clients may be the only gift they will receive this holiday season. With that in mind, the warehouse elves work extremely hard to make sure all 15,000-plus bags get packed not only with loving care but with a substantial amount of practical necessities and useful fun things.

In order to have enough inventory to pack these bags we rely on donations from many different sources. We needed almost 300 different types of items this year to fill the gift bag orders. Manufacturers or distributors will donate items in bulk quantities, such as 10,000 hand lotions, shampoos and blankets. School groups, businesses and individuals will hold donation drives and we are fortunate to benefit from the generosity of many.

During the 2008 Season, we experienced a dramatic decrease in some of the donated items we have relied on in the past. Since we didn't receive these items as donations, we purchased them. This was an added expense late in the season we had not anticipated and it had a significant impact on our spending. This makes us even more grateful to those who supported us with donations of these much needed gift bag items. Your contributions are one of the biggest parts of this organization and the people who receive the gift bags appreciate your generosity. Thanks to all the businesses that donated bulk products and to those who ran drives or collected items for our gift bags.

BUSINESSES – COLLECTIONS – DRIVES

Aluf Plastics
Plastic Bags

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Plastic Bags

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Personal Care Products and More

McLoone's Running Store
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Monmouth University
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New Jersey Natural Gas Co.
Blankets

Nut Swamp School Second Grade
Candy Canes and ChapStick

Passaic County Elks CP Adult Treatment Center
Blankets, Toys and More

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Blankets

Vonage
Clothing

Women's Guild of Seton Hall
Toys, Blankets, Stuffed Animals and More

WRAT Radio
Candy Canes and Stocking Stuffers

Wyeth
Chapstick

Several Schools and Community Organizations
Lots of Candy

SICKLES MARKET WINE & CHEESE CLASSIC

The annual Sickles Market Wine & Cheese Classic to benefit Holiday Express was another big success! Past "Crystal Apple" award winner Brian Pasch and his wife, Denise, graciously hosted the event on October 5, 2008, under a very large tent in the backyard of their lovely home.

Mark and Barbara Murphy, long time Holiday Express volunteers were honored with the "2008 Crystal Apple" award for their continuing community service and their passion for fine wine. The award was presented by Bob Sickles and last years recipients, Paulette and Larry Roberts.

The evening included a great selection of handpicked wines and a premium wine bar that featured rare wines donated by local collectors. Artisanal local chefs, dedicated to high quality and high flavor, donated their time and delicious fares to the delight of the more than 200 guests. Brian skillfully emceed the live auction that included a trip to Napa Valley, and the ever popular "Wine Crawls" made famous by Bob Sickles. Tim McLoone and several members of the Holiday Express band, including "Crystal Apple" award winner Mark Murphy on bass, entertained the highly energetic crowd until it was time to go.

A huge thank you to Brian and Denise Pasch for opening up their home and for all the work they put in to host an event such as this. We are also very grateful to all the sponsors and donors for their generous support. Their selfless generosity made the evening a success raising over \$50,000 for Holiday Express. It was truly an epicurean adventure where the guests were able to explore the subtleties of food and wine pairing and enjoy the camaraderie of fellow aficionados.



Brian Pasch



Mark & Barbara Murphy



Carol Stillwell & Bob Sickles



Tim & Beth McLoone



CHARLES IN CHARGE

by Phyllis McQuillan

One of the first things you notice about Charles Overton is his smile. It's one of those megawatt jobs that could power the lights on Broadway. Except on this particular night, Charles is lighting up the stage at the NJPAC where he is performing with Holiday Express. Charles belts out two numbers – "Honeysuckle Rose" and "Silver Bells" – and the crowd rewarded his efforts with enthusiastic applause and a standing ovation.

Charles – Charlie to his friends – is not a regular member of Holiday Express. Rather, he lives at Friends House, a residence in New York City for people living with HIV/AIDS. Charles and Holiday Express found each other on a cold December night in 2006, when the group staged a holiday party at Friends House. Before the show began, Charles had mentioned to one of the volunteers he was a singer. During the show, the band handed him the microphone and after he sang "Honeysuckle Rose" there were very few dry eyes in the room. He remembers that night well. "I took one look at all those great musicians in Holiday Express and said 'That's my band!'"

Charles' journey to being an honorary member of the band started in Pittsburgh, where he grew up the fourth of six children in a house that was always filled with music. "There was gospel, jazz, pop. Everyone from Nat King Cole to Doris Day." Charles always loved music and sang in his elementary school chorus and in an a cappella group in high school. After high school, he didn't know what he wanted to do with his life, so he decided to enlist in the Army. "Bad idea," he says now with a laugh. "NOT a good idea." This was the 1960s and before he knew it, he wound up being shipped off to Vietnam for a year-long tour.

After his discharge, he decided he wanted to join his older brother in New York, teach under privileged children and pursue his art. "I wanted to be one of Gladys Knight's Pips, I wanted to be Leslie Uggams, I wanted to be them all!" He wound up taking a job in banking, but continued to feed the creative fire that burned within and took voice and dance lessons while working in community theatre and taking part in music workshops. He eventually quit his job and supported himself as a waiter while pursuing his artistic dreams full-time. He landed a job as a dresser for the disco-era group Chic and starred in a one-man cabaret show.

Along the way, he fell in love and moved to Europe with his partner. But 15 years ago, he returned to the U.S. and discovered he was HIV-positive. This is never a good diagnosis, but it was especially dire in the early 1990s, because at the time, there wasn't a drug or treatment to halt the progression of the disease. Charles became very sick and lost many friends to the disease, but a year or two after his diagnosis, researchers came up with the drug cocktail that has extended and saved so many lives – including Charles'.

There have been some health bumps along the way, but Charles notes, "I am alive. I am ALIVE! And today my HIV is undetectable." His love of performing never dimmed and as soon as he was well enough he began to sing again, first with the choir at Marble Collegiate Church in Manhattan and then he was handpicked to sing with New York Metro Mass Choir. He also performs every December 1st – World AIDS Day – at the Veterans Administration.

But it wasn't until Holiday Express came along that he began to feel he had found his musical soulmates. Charles performed last summer at the Holiday Express Clambake and even spent a day at the warehouse to see how it all comes together. Charles calls Holiday Express founder and president Tim McLoone "my guardian angel" and says "I have met so many wonderful people. I feel like an honorary resident of the Jersey Shore!"

In addition to his appearance at NJPAC, Charles also brought down the house at one of the Holiday Express shows at the Count Basie Theatre in Red Bank in December. "It was incredible," he remembers with that big smile.

"The Count Basie Theatre – forget it! I couldn't believe it!" He admits it was nerve-racking getting up on the big stage, "but I knew I had the goods to deliver. I finally realized – I am this talented person!" Everyone in the audience that night realized it too.



An incomparable trio – Peter Reinhart, Rusty Young and Charlie Parton – who annually "win" the auction allowing them to "Sing with the Band" at Count Basie! In 2008, they also performed this original Holiday Express parody!

**The Holiday Express Noel
(to the tune of *The First Noel*)**

The Holiday Express,
New Jersey's finest,
Is giving the gift
of human kindness.

To the young and the old,
To the hungry and poor,
Tim McLoone and the gang
Bring Holiday cheer.

(Chorus) Holiday Express, Holiday Express
Bringing the gift of human kindness

Cheers for Frosty and the Grinch,
And the dancing Noels,
But the loudest applause
Goes to Santa Claus.

If you are feeling sad,
They will make you feel glad;
Cause nobody oughta be
Alone at Christmas.

(Chorus) Holiday Express, Holiday Express
Bringing the gift of human kindness.

If you're hungry, If you're down,
Or you're wheelchair bound;
Your burdens grow light
With candles burning bright.

Greystone to St. Johns,
Matheny and Friends;
November December
The time to remember.

(Chorus) Holiday Express, Holiday Express
Bringing the gift of human kindness.

They load and they pack,
Give a pat on the back.
To those behind the scenes,
The mighty volunteers.

So open your hearts,
And your wallets too,
Remember those
Not as lucky as you.

(Chorus) Holiday Express, Holiday Express
Bringing the gift of human kindness.

(Final Chorus)
Holiday Express, Holiday Express
Bringing the gift of human kindness.

Lyrics by Peter and Nancy Reinhart; as performed by Charlie Parton, Rusty Young, and Peter Reinhart at the Count Basie Concert on December 18, 2008. With special thanks to the Holiday Express singers and musicians, staff and volunteers.

The Unparalleled Resumé of a Holiday Express Truck Driver!

by Russ Pangborn



The first time I heard of Holiday Express had to be six years ago through a radio spot for the Big Joe Henry 101.5 FM fundraiser at Jenkinson's; and, of course, hearing "All Alone On Christmas." I went to that event and then to Count Basie the same year and was really interested in getting involved with the group. I reached out and forgot about it until the next October when I got a response to my email! I was not able to make the first meeting, and that year went by without participating; but I still made it to Count Basie and felt quite drawn again. The next October, I was sitting in the Celtic Cottage talking to Pat Guadagno about Holiday Express and my desire to participate. I think the quote was something about "getting off my butt and doing it at last!" Pat contacted Amy (Robinson DeHays) and told her I was willing to do almost anything needed – *and would look good in red tights!* So in 2007, I finally filled out a volunteer form. I received a reply from Don

Pignataro, saying here are some days we need a truck driver. I think I signed up for all of them!

My first Holiday Express moment was when I walked into the warehouse and noticed people running all over the place, putting gift bags together. Then I went into the office to say "Hi," – and felt like I already knew everyone. Five minutes later I heard, "Here are the keys and directions, you better get going." Off I went, got to the location, found out where the event was being held, and unloaded most of the boxes of gifts. When the busload of volunteers arrived, everyone pitched in and carried something into the event. I thought my "job" was over until the show ended. But then I was sought out by Donna Edington, Program Director, who had a box with a green suit in it. She told me, "Here, put this on, you're the Grinch!" She could not have found a more perfect costume for me! At that particular time in my life, I *felt* like the Grinch. But thanks to Holiday Express, my Christmas spirit was just getting rekindled.

Since 2007, I have probably been at close to 50 events and have been fortunate to wear many costumes, sometimes three at an event. Those character costumes may just be cloth, fiberglass and plastic, but they are also magic. Once you put one on, you can't help but morph into the character and have tons of fun. The Grinch is my favorite, next to the big guy in the Red Suit. There is nothing better than being Santa Claus. From the little children who still believe in the man, to the older people who still believe in the spirit, it is all good. Sometimes too good, and I would like to thank the Santa Security Force for keeping Santa upright and on his feet on a couple of occasions. I love the attention, being a ham, and the theatre-like performances are fantastic.

But the real feelings are created by the responses you get at the events – being able to touch someone, look into their eyes, and see reactions that I cannot explain. I am sure anyone who has been fortunate enough to be a Holiday Express "Santa" knows what I mean. It is extremely special! It is truly giving the gift of human kindness – and then receiving it right back, too. No matter how much time and energy I give to Holiday Express, I walk away with so much more than I could possibly give. I am thankful my Christmas Seasons are special again.

I met Issac (top photo) at my first Holiday Express event in 2007, at Millburn Regional Day School. After the event he called out my name, and I wondered how he knew it until I remembered I was wearing a nametag. "Russ, I'll see you next year," and I responded, "You bet." In 2008, I saw Issac again. Definitely sign me up for the 2009 Millburn event!

[Editor's Note: Russ Pangborn is also one of the talented photographers who take pictures for us at Holiday Express events!]



George Curtis has been part of Holiday Express since 1998. During this time, his very real beard has grown many inches! Even without his red suit, George can pass as the "real" Santa!



Rich Spahr, another one of our dedicated Holiday Express truck driver Santas, is a valued volunteer who has made it into the red suit and white beard at countless events since 2001.



Tom Kelly – Several years ago, Ron "Elfis" Bruer told me about Holiday Express and what a difference it has made in his life, so in 2002, I began to volunteer. I am an auto technician by profession, so in addition to driving the truck, I also service the organization's van.

I have appeared as Santa and many other characters at events – whatever Donna needs to put on the show. My favorite memory is playing Santa at two Lakeview School events. My "job" included making my way down the hallway and giving out gift bags. I got to interact with each student individually and found it to be a very moving experience for me.

My wife and I have three children who are all involved in music, so I was happy to bring a small brass band to the Holiday Express Concert at Count Basie in 2002 to do a pre-show performance in the lobby. My son accompanies me to the Matheny event annually.

John Grimes and Ray Lofmark – John has been behind the wheel of the truck at a few events each year and Ray has been "apprenticing" since 2007.

Mr. Scott The Music Man

This past season, joining Ron (Elfis) Bruer, our longtime “professional” Holiday Express Elf, is a spirited man who is also made for the part! Seen jumping wildly with clients surrounding him at numerous events, Elf Scott Lewis makes the “Energizer Bunny” seem like a slug!



Elfis stirs up the crowd at Count Basie



Mr. Scott, the Music Man with Dan Reuter on tambourine



Scott gets goofy and the girls take his lead



Scott hangs on to an amused woman at Convention Hall

About two years ago, I was fortunate enough to be at a Holiday Express event when they performed at The Schroth School in Wanamassa, where my son is a student. Needless to say I was floored by the level of talent in the group, but even more important, I was touched by the way each member engaged this special needs audience – children bouncing, rocking in their wheelchairs, smiles and happiness all around.

This past summer I was checking out a band at Jazz in The Park in Red Bank, and I ran into my good friend and Holiday Express saxman, Rick Brunermer. He introduced me to Amy Robinson DeHays, and in early October I went over to the warehouse, auditioned with the band and here I am.

So this was my rookie season and I am officially hooked on Holiday Express and their mission! I was able to volunteer at about 15 events this past season; however, my plan going forward is to keep my work schedule on the light side for the 2009 tour, so I can be at many more shows (working with Holiday Express is extremely addictive, you know).

My very first event was at Woodbine Developmental Center and since I rehearsed all those weeks with the band, I fully expected to be on stage. But this was not meant to be. When I arrived, I was asked to be the Grinch. When I wasn't the Grinch, I started cutting my teeth as an Elf. Little did I know that being an Elf was going to be my main offering at all the upcoming events. I got into the role so much so that I rented my own costume for the

season. Over the course of my “Elfing,” Donna kept saying that I needed a catchy name, so I dubbed myself “The Energizer Elf.” I plan to have a snazzy new elf costume created in time for the 2009 season.

Aside from the glory of Elfing, I have also served meals, handed out gifts and joined in with the band at a few events as well.

My wife, Valerie, and I have 4 sons between us, ages 19, 17, 14 and 10. I brought the two older boys into the marriage and Valerie brought along her two younger sons.

My full time occupation is that of a Music and Movement Composer/Educator/Performer. Basically I write music for preschool audiences, ages 2-6, that goes along with whole body movements. Think Music Appreciation meets Aerobics. In addition to writing and performing, I also give workshops for teachers on the importance of Music and Movement and how to implement a program into their school's curriculum. As a musician/player, I am an accomplished drummer and keyboard player with many years of playing/performing experience.

There are so many memorable moments from my first season, but if I am forced to choose just one, it would probably be Amy Broza singing “God Bless America” to the National Guard families in Asbury Park. The whole day was special, the audience was so appreciative and when Amy closed the show with such a heart felt rendition of this beautiful song, I admit that there was moisture collecting around my eyes.

Phyllis McQuillan at Friend's House



Seth Murphy with Olympic Medalist Christy Rampone at National Guard Families' event



Junior Elf Tai at Rumson Country Day School event



Elf Jackie Kulch at Woodbridge Development Center

Helping Holiday Express Deliver

Volunteer Spotlight

Jack Readie

Simply stated: Where would Holiday Express be without the gentle kindness and trustworthy expertise of Jack Readie!



I was introduced to the music and mission of Holiday Express when they performed at the very first tree lighting in Red Bank. My wife Liz and I owned a specialty food store and catering business in Red Bank and I was involved in RiverCenter, the organization working to revitalize the downtown business community. Through RiverCenter, our business provided the food and beverages for the Holiday Express volunteers and musicians at that event and for many years afterward. We loved the music and the community spirit that filled the town that night and since then we have always enjoyed going to the tree lighting with our family and grandchildren.

When Liz and I sold our business in 2001, it gave us the opportunity to spend more time with Holiday Express. We had experience with making gift baskets, so Amy Robinson DeHays, whose family had been our neighbors and friends for years, recruited us to help make baskets for the Dinner Dance fundraiser. One day about five years ago, I was at a wake and felt a tug on my arm. It was Tim McLoone. He explained that Holiday Express was growing and they needed someone to coordinate the food and beverages served at all the events and asked me if I would do it. I don't think anyone has figured out how to say no to Tim, so here I am.

I work with all the event managers to determine what they need for each event. Sometimes it's just cake and drinks, while other events have a full-course meal. But we always keep in mind that this might be the only party the guests will go to all year, so we try to make it special. My job is to order what we need from our suppliers and to coordinate the pick-up and delivery to make sure everything is ready for each event.

I have met many caring and generous people through Holiday Express. People like Peter Cancro from Jersey Mike's, who is so willing to donate the thousands of sub sandwiches we use each season; and Bill La Morte from Ronston Paper who donates all the paper products we use and always says, "Jack, if you run short, call me; don't go out and buy anything." These people are behind the scenes and don't always get recognition, but if it wasn't for the kindness and generosity of these guys and other businesses, we couldn't do what we do.

Like all Holiday Express volunteers I have many wonderful memories of my experiences over the years. I was fortunate to be part of a small group of Holiday Express musicians and volunteers who went to New Orleans

after Hurricane Katrina. It was heartbreaking to see the devastation there and it was very challenging to find places to get food and beverages to serve at the events because most businesses were destroyed. It was very gratifying to see how appreciative everyone was to have a little bit of joy during a time of such despair. But of all the memories, the one that especially stands out for me is the first time I ever volunteered at a Holiday Express event. I had been working at the warehouse one morning and they were short on volunteers for the show at Lakeview School, and asked me to come along. I had never been in an environment like that before and I was so moved by the students, many of whom were very disabled. Soon after the party started, Donna asked me to dress up as Santa and greet each child and give them a gift bag at the end of the show. I had never done anything like that before and believe me, I was very nervous about playing Santa. But, the children were so excited and joyful that I had as much fun as they did. It was such an emotional day for me and I have never felt so blessed.

Liz and I have two daughters and four grandchildren. Our daughter Lisa and her husband Dave have two daughters, Emily and Hannah; and our daughter Jill and her husband David live in Pennsylvania with their children, Mark and Julie. Liz helps to make gift baskets for the Clambake fundraiser, and she volunteers frequently at the warehouse. Our granddaughters Emily and Hannah have volunteered at the warehouse and Holiday Express events over the years with their Girl Scout troops. This past season, even Liz's 92-year-old mom, Marion, started volunteering at the warehouse. She would go two or three days a week with her friend Gladys and loved it. God willing, she is already looking forward to next year.

In the "off-season," I will be golfing as much as I can, trying to make up for all the golf I didn't get to play when we owned the store. I also enjoy playing the piano and going to my grandchildren's sporting events and dance recitals. But I always look forward to the fall and the next season of Holiday Express.

The wonderful thing about Holiday Express is that all the volunteers are there because they want to be there. What a great environment that creates. This has been a great experience for me.

I can honestly say I've gotten a lot more back from Holiday Express than I've given.



Liz Readie, Julie D'Agostino, Hannah Mayer, Emily Mayer, Jack Readie, Mark D'Agostino. Seated is Marion Quartararo

Jim Mizell

A drummer's position in the Holiday Express band is usually towards the back of the stage. Unlike the singers, guitar and horn players who get to travel around the rooms and interact with clients at our events, the drummer stays with his drum set. So close, yet so far away. This time, Jim Mizell – a humble, dedicated, versatile and friendly man – deserves to be right up front to tell his story!

In the summer of 1996, I was playing with a jazz trio in Red Bank when this guy comes up and hands me a business card. He said the guy on the card needs a drummer this Saturday night. The guy turned out to be Tom Dragonette, one of the drummers in Holiday Express and the name on the card was Tim McLoone!

I did the gig with Tim and then a few more. During one of those gigs Tim told me about Holiday Express and that they do a lot of events in December. He asked me if I would be interested, mentioned there was a meeting coming up at the Rum Runner and gave me the date. When I got there I could not believe all the people. I noticed a lot of musicians that I knew of, but had never met. It was like the "Who's Who of the Jersey Shore." Then I saw Tom again and thanked him for getting me involved in Holiday Express. He kind of laughed and said "We'll see if you thank me at the end of the season." By Christmas Eve day, I knew what he meant! December was a blur. It was hard trying to fit everything in – my job, Holiday Express events, my regular gigs – and some sleep. This has been one of the best things I have ever done in my life and I love every minute of it.

I live in Keyport with my wife, Carol, who has been volunteering since 2003. Carol began working in the warehouse and now attends events.

We love to travel and have been through the United States, Europe, the Greek Islands, the Caribbean and Australia. One of the highlights from one of the trips was scuba diving in the Great Barrier Reef.

My brother, John, lives in Houston with his wife Kathy and their two daughters: Cloie and Olivia. My parents were always supportive of my music. My mother was a singer when she was young. She studied in New York and planned on making singing a career. World War II broke out; and, because five of her seven brothers went to war, she had to help take care of her younger siblings, putting her own plans on hold. After the war she did not pursue a professional singing career. However, when my brother and I were young, my Mom would sit John and me on the sofa and entertain us by singing and dancing.

I'm mostly self-taught on the drums. I've studied with Joe Cusatis, Terry Silverlight and Joe Morello. I mainly work as a freelance drummer. Over the last few months I have been lucky enough to play with Alan Grant & Primitive Soul, Rain, Tim McLoone & the Shirleys,



The Jerry Topinka Jazz Trio, Turnpike Mike's Rock & Blues Band – and released a third CD with the Jon Caspi Band. I enjoy listening to and studying many different styles and types of music. My overall goal is to be a knowledgeable well-rounded musician, capable of playing many different types of music.

During the day I am a system analyst for the US Navy. I work at the Military Sealift Command UNREP Training Center located at Naval Weapons Station Earle, Colts Neck. My job has included many professional opportunities and the chance to travel to many destinations, even on Navy ships.

One of my most memorable moments was one year on Christmas Eve at St John's Soup Kitchen. The band was playing. Tim was having fun with the crowd and introducing the singers. Through the clear plastic tent I noticed a line of people as far as I could see, who were waiting to join in. I saw our guests inside the tent being served food, being helped to their seats, and tables being cleared by our volunteers. Even though it was cold, damp and the weather outside was miserable, our volunteers performed these duties with smiles on their faces and warm hearts making sure that everyone had a special day. Then I noticed the Holiday Express truck parked behind the band. It was open and I saw that it was filled with boxes. I couldn't see what was in them, but I saw our volunteers starting to unload them. As they unloaded, they began giving the contents of the boxes to the people as they left the party. It's funny, but this is what sticks with me. As the band played, it seemed like song after song, box after box came out of the truck. It felt like it was endless. Between the party in front of me and the truck behind me, I was seeing the whole idea of Holiday Express at that moment. *The Gift of Human Kindness* was all around me.

Holiday Express has had an impact on both Carol's and my life. We had always wanted to volunteer but we had never found the right thing. Holiday Express has turned out to be that vehicle for us. The month of December and the Christmas season have changed for us. We find that shopping and other holiday activities have taken a back seat. Going to the events and seeing what Holiday Express does and how much we feel we are contributing to the less fortunate is the Christmas spirit to us. I am so happy to be part of this wonderful organization.



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



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