

2017 YEARBOOK

A Message from TIM McLOONE



To the Holiday Express family,

I think that when the idea of doing 100 events in our 25th year was first brought up (okay, it was me), I hadn't really considered the logistical and budgetary implications involved. Well, watching everyone really step up to make sure that it not only happened, but that all of our "clients" were treated with the same level of care and compassion as always, was an amazing thing to observe.

I really do not know how the warehouse was so organized, how the trucks were loaded and delivered everything to all the sites, how the band was booked, how all the volunteers manned every event. It was incredible and all I had to do was play the piano and take all of the credit.

The credit obviously goes to all of you who are reading this, whether you sang, donated, went to the Basie, worked at the warehouse, or did anything to make what appeared to be the impossible actually happen. And, of course, our office staff and board kept everything moving forward with the passion necessary to get all of that done.

When it all began in 1993, I certainly didn't envision any of this. It's humbling to think that so many of you have found a reason to be a part of all that is Holiday Express. For me, I have discovered that the Holex experience is as much about healing ourselves as it is about doing good for others. And for all of that, I thank you.

So, let's do it again.

Tim McLoone Founder

Words from LORRIE KLARIC



Dawn Bunyon, and Patricia Wotton

Greetings to all our Holiday Express friends,

Wow! We knew that hosting 100 events in 49 days for our 25th anniversary would take a village. You, our dedicated volunteers and supporters, delivered! Our 25th season took hours of meticulous planning, hundreds of musicians lending their incredible talent and beautiful voices, and thousands of volunteers cheerfully packing gift bags, driving trucks, serving meals, and sharing hugs and smiles. This season was extra-special, as it gave us an opportunity to truly appreciate Tim McLoone's vision when he founded Holiday Express 25 years ago, and fully comprehend what our mission means today. You generously shared your time, talent, and treasure because you also believe that no one should be "All Alone on Christmas."

Thank you for all you do. We are humbled by your extraordinary commitment to our mission and honored to have you as a part of our Holiday Express family. We could not deliver the gift of human kindness without you.

> With heartfelt appreciation, Lorrie Klaric **Executive Director**



OUR MISSION STATEMENT

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.

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CONTACT INFORMATION

We love to hear from you, and there are a number of ways to contact us at Holiday Express! Please be sure to follow us on our website and on social media for details, updates, information on ways to lend support, and countless amazing photos from our many events during the holiday season and throughout the year!

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6	INSTAGRAM	Holidayexpresself

Holiday Express is a registered 501(c)(3) organization. Federal Tax ID: 22-3470019

11/6	High Point School, Morganville, NJ
	MHA of Morris Cty., Morris Plains, NJ
11/7	PG Chambers School, Cedar Knolls, NJ
	Washington Elem. Prog., Paramus, NJ
11/8	Cerebral Palsy League, Cranford, NJ
	Unity Place of Monmouth Cty., Oceanport, NJ
	Veterans Haven South, Winslow, NJ
11/9	Mt. Carmel Guild - Union Cty., Scotch Plains, NJ
	Veterans Haven North, Glen Gardner, NJ
11/10	Deron School, Union, NJ
	Daybreak Treatment Care, West Berlin, NJ
11/11	VA at St. Albans, Jamaica, NY
11/13	Ocean Mental Health, Bayville, NJ
	Catholic Charities Housing Svc., Jersey City, NJ
11/14	Bright Beginnings Learning Ctr., Piscataway, NJ
	Piscataway Regional Day, Piscataway, NJ
	Cheshire Home, Florham Park, NJ
11/15	CTC Academy, Oakland, NJ
	Spectrum for Living, Rockleigh, NJ
	HomeFront, Ewing Township, NJ
11/16	NJEDDA Elem. School, Clifton, NJ
	Community Access Unlimited, Elizabeth, NJ
11/17	Larc School, Bellmawr, NJ
	DLC Warren Morris Union JC, Warren, NJ
11/18	Mercy Home, Brooklyn, NY
11/19	Six Flags Great Adventure, Jackson, NJ
	Crystal Lake Healthcare & Rehab, Bayville, NJ
11/20	Ladacin - Lehmann School, Lakewood, NJ
	C. C. Partners in Recovery, Trenton, NJ
11/21	Woodbine Dev. Ctr., Woodbine, NJ
	Ancora Psychiatric Hosp., Hammonton, NJ
1	Jersey Shore Rescue Mission, Asbury Park, NJ
11/24	Red Bank Town Lighting, Red Bank, NJ
11/25	Turning Point, Paterson, NJ
	Friends to Friends, Ridgewood, NJ
11/26	Covenant House PA, Phila., PA
11/27	CVR, Eatontown, NJ
11/28	Straight & Narrow, Paterson, NJ Ctr. for Educ. Advancement, Flemington, NJ
11/20	
11/29	Reg. Day School at Jackson, Jackson, NJ Norman A. Bleshman School, Paramus, NJ
11/29	Eva's Village, Paterson, NJ
11/30	Medallion Behavioral Health, Clifton, NJ
11/ 30	NJEDDA Adult Training Center, Clifton, NJ
	Preferred Behavioral Health, Brick, NJ
12/1	Children's Ctr. of Monmouth Cty., Neptune, NJ
12/2	DAWNcil, Randolph, NJ
	Hudson Milestones, Jersey City, NJ
	Children's Specialized Hospital, Mountainside, NJ
12/3	Benefit Family Matinee @ OCC, Toms River, NJ

	OCC ARC Event, Toms River, NJ
12/4	DCF Regional School, Bayville, NJ
	A. Harry Moore School, Jersey City, NJ
	CPC Behavioral Health, Port Monmouth, NJ
12/5	Community Care Behav. Health, Freehold, NJ
1275	NJEDDA High School, Clifton, NJ
12/6	Collier School, Wickatunk, NJ
1270	Sisters Academy, Asbury Park, NJ
	FRA, Tinton Falls, NJ
12/7	University Behavioral Health, Piscataway, NJ
•••••	
12/8	Paramus Adult Training Ctr., Paramus, NJ Alpha School, Jackson, NJ
10/0	
12/9	Market Street Mission, Morristown, NJ
	Children's Specialized Hospital, Toms River, NJ
10/10	East. Christian Children's Retreat, Wyckoff, NJ
12/10	St. Francis Inn, Phila., NJ
•••••	Bancroft, Cherry Hill, NJ
1	Matheny, Peapack, NJ
12/11	The Phoenix Center, Nutley, NJ
	St. Joseph's Sch. for the Blind, Jersey City, NJ
	Independence360, Hanover, NJ
12/12	Trenton Area Soup Kitchen, Trenton, NJ
	Trenton Psychiatric Hosp., Ewing, NJ
12/13	Ladacin- Schroth Sch., Wanamassa, NJ
	Cerebral Palsy of North Jersey, Clark, NJ
	Joseph's House, Camden, NJ
12/14	Easter Seals, Lincroft, NJ
	Midland School, North Branch, NJ
	Audrey Hepburn, Hackensack, NJ
12/15	Blythedale Children's Hosp., Valhalla, NY
	Gateway School, Carteret, NJ
	MHA of Essex Cty., Montclair, NJ
12/16	Thank-A-Vet, Phila., PA
	New Lisbon Dev. Ctr., New Lisbon, NJ
12/17	Vineland Dev. Ctr., Vineland, NJ
	Lyons House and Jespy, Lyons, NJ
	Hunterdon Dev. Ctr., Clinton, NJ
12/18	Hawkswood School, Eatontown, NJ
	Count Basie Theatre, Red Bank, NJ
12/19	Harbor School, Eatontown, NJ
	Count Basie Theatre, Red Bank, NJ
12/20	Lakeview School, Edison, NJ
	Oasis, Paterson, NJ
12/21	Red Ribbon Academy, Wayne, NJ
	NJID Adult Program, Toms River, NJ
12/22	The Shore Center, Tinton Falls, NJ
12/23	St. Ann's Soup Kitchen, Newark, NJ
	Trinity Church Soup Kitchen, Asbury Park, NJ
12/24	St. John's Soup Kitchen, Newark, NJ

2017 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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ONCE UPON A TIME... Longtime Volunteers Take a Look Back

When Tim McLoone first assembled his band of merry musicians and other volunteers
to visit those in need of holiday cheer all those years ago, little did any of them know how long that
tradition would continue or what an important part of their lives it would become.
Twenty-five years later, many of those same volunteers - hailing from towns throughout the area and
representing all walks of life - remain with Holiday Express, and some of them share here their
own reflections on how it all began and their hopes for the next 25 years.

>>> Bob Boyd's

involvement goes back to the very beginning. "I was playing with a band at the old Rum Runner," he recalls, "and as we were packing up, Tim came up to talk to the bass player about this idea he had and there was a meeting. I butted in and said 'I'm in.' I'm very proud to be an original member and have so many fond memories of the early



days when we were just starting out. I've made so many lifelong friends, it's truly a blessing."

>>> Jim Celestino was introduced to the group by a friend at work back in 1995. "Holiday Express was a completely unique experience. It was the first time we had been involved with the idea of bringing music and love to friends in need. Once you become involved, and you begin to understand the impact that Holiday Express has on not only our guests, but each of us, you can't help but spread the word about our mission. It is true that our guests wait all year for us to come back and spend time together." A talented and engaging musician, Jim has also been an event



volunteer, truck driver, warehouse worker, co-event manager, Giving Partner, and band rhythm section coordinator for the events. He's helped build and fit out every warehouse move the organization made, helped build the addition at St. Mark's Soup Kitchen, served as VP on the board, and served on numerous special committees. "I love being involved with loving, giving, kind people like our volunteers. I have made the best of friends in my 23 years. But for me, there is nothing like the personal connection we make with our guests each time we go out. It is a miracle! There have been so many amazing memories over the years; some huge and right in front of our eyes, and some small, quiet ones in a corner where a guest may have smiled for the first time anyone can remember. All are a blessing. But when I think back, our first visit on Christmas Eve to St. John's Soup Kitchen in Newark stands out for me. It was the first time we held an event on Christmas Eve. We were a small but mighty group of volunteers. We played outside and served hot soup out of a huge pot. It was bitterly cold and snowing. Our guests came out of the cold to eat, enjoy the music, and go back into the cold. I can remember many tears that day." His hopes for the future are "that we have an influx of young, hardworking, selfless, kind, and talented people to carry on Tim's vision after we have moved on. That they recognize the importance of our mission. That the combination of music and love is a powerful force, and Holiday Express uses it in a unique way. I hope we grow in the area of development and sponsorships, and there will be ample funding to help move our mission forward. It has been an amazing journey. It has changed my life in so many ways I could have never imagined."

>>> Vocalist Layonne Holmes was brought onboard in the very first season by her mom, Delores. Since then, she's been singing with the band and, for many years, she designed and maintained the website,

newsletters, and yearbook. "I always liked that Holiday Express meets people right where they are, no expectations, and does the same for its volunteers, meaning everyone is able to bring whatever they have to offer," she explains. "After so many years, we are family. I've learned so much about being thankful from Holiday Express."



ONCE UPON A TIME...

>>> Jeanne Cosentino - a.k.a. Mrs. Claus, event manager, craft guru, and face painter extraordinaire - first heard about Holiday Express around 1995. "There were no official sign-ups back then. Tim's home voicemail told the coming events and bus times. Jimmy Celestino and I brought our boys and we got on the bus. We knew no one; kind

of funny now when you see how organized everything is! I covered a craft table and Jimmy and the boys covered carnival-type games that we used to do at some events. I just felt the need



to give back and wanted to show my kids how to give back. It started with my son and me, and a few years later, my daughter and my husband Tony started to volunteer. Way back then, we didn't have age restrictions; my daughter was eight or nine and helped with crafts. And now I have an amazing group of friends who have morphed into family!" Among her favorite moments are "the one-on-one time you get with clients when you face paint. Sometimes it's quick and quiet; other times, you get to hear people's hopes, fears, and dreams. They are often just so happy to have someone to listen. I once had an older gentleman from Philadelphia telling me he was close to getting his CDL license and then he'll get a job and be able to move out of his car."

>>> Jeanne's husband, **Tony Cosentino**, started in the third year of Holiday Express at the urging of his wife, convinced by the moving stories that she shared with him. "I really didn't know what to expect when I went to my first show," he recalls. "Donna Edington put me into the Frosty costume and the rest was history. The faces on the children that we visit and the smiles we get from all the clients we see keep me coming back year after year." Tony is in charge of producing the events along with each day's event manager. He also plays all of the public



appearances of the Grinch character - plus whatever else is asked of him. Best of all, he states, "is being part of a family of likeminded people who are giving of themselves to make someone else's life a little better, even if for only one day. The memories that are embedded in my mind,

and the stories that we hear about the things that have happened to our clients because of our being there, are what make it so special to me." He says that one of his favorite memories involves "a woman soldier who changed her entire life because of a single dance with the Grinch, which will live with me till the day I die." His wish is that "the younger generation comes onboard and keeps this great organization alive for the next 25 years."

>>> Popular musician **Pat Guadagno** remembers, "I got a call from

Tim that he was gathering a few musicians to do something, and he asked if I would come to the Rum Runner to discuss it with him. None of us knew what the mission was. It was being created before our eyes. We went where we were supposed to go, guided by hands much bigger



than our own." He adds with a laugh, "On Day

1, we were waiting at the Rum Runner for our leader to tell us why we were assembled. I had the musicians believing that Tim had started an Amway franchise and we were all going to become distributors." Ask Pat what he does for Holiday Express and he will tell you, "A fraction of a fraction of what the teachers, workers, and volunteers who support and comfort our clientele do the other 364 days a year." On a more somber note about a past event, he comments, "Columbine changed my life. Certainly not a 'favorite,' but an indelible memory." Appropriately enough, this soulful singer expressed a special 25th anniversary message to Holiday Express through these song lyrics by John Hiatt: "You were dreaming on a park bench/'Bout a broad highway somewhere/When the music from the carillon/Seemed to hurl your heart out there/Past the scientific darkness/Past the fireflies that float/To an angel bending down/To wrap you in her warmest coat/And you ask, "What am I not doing?"/She says "Your voice cannot command/In time, you will move mountains/And it will come through your hands."

>>> Pat's brother, **Michael Guadagno,** explains that he began playing bass with Tim McLoone in the early '70s, while he was still in

law school. "When I got a job in New York, I had to quit the band, but years later, when I heard Tim had formed Holiday Express, I asked to join. I just finished my 24th season. Initially, I knew little about its mission. I just thought it would be fun to play for people during the



holiday season with the great musicians Tim had assembled. That soon changed after playing a few shows and learning how rewarding the experience is. One of my favorite events was, and continues to be, at The Matheny School, a residential facility for children with developmental disabilities. I learned from Maureen Staub, a volunteer who coordinated that show each year, that one of the children at Matheny wanted to be adopted by two of her relatives. At the time, I was sitting as a family court judge in Freehold and told Maureen I thought we could make that happen. After the paperwork was completed, she arranged to transport the child to Freehold and I formalized the adoption, followed by a party in my courtroom." Mike notes that the group knows how to have fun together, saying, "There seems to be an ongoing competition among the many volunteers who don the Grinch costume and go out into the audience to cause mischief, while Tim reminds the clients not to touch the Grinch because 'We had him tested and determined that he has cooties."

>>> Twenty-four years ago, **Kathryn Barnett** was the chairman of special events for Red Bank RiverCenter and she approached Tim Mc-Loone about participating in the annual tree lighting. Of course, he said yes and the tradition continues to this day, with the town lighting and



a performance by Holiday Express held on the day after Thanksgiving. That first year, she explains, "Tim asked if we could do some fundraising from area businesses. **RiverCenter** contacted the Red Bank

merchants and we created gift baskets with

those donations and gave them to him at that tree lighting. The Kathryn Barnett School of Dance dancers were also part of the celebration and after the show, Tim invited us to perform with them at King James Nursing Home the next week. We had been involved with doing community service performances for about 10 years and were excited to do another. Upon arrival, I noticed that the population of the nursing home was different. Of course, there were seniors, but there was also a large number of young women with small children. We danced and interacted with the audience and had a great time. As I was leaving, I asked Tim about the women. He said that they were from the local battered women's shelter and had been bused to the event. A shock ran through me and I watched as they got in the van to go back to the shelter. Lo and behold, the gift baskets from the tree lighting were in the van to go to the group home. I was able to see that donations go directly to the needy. From that moment on, Holiday Express has been an integral part of the KBSD family." The best part, Kathryn says, is "The love! The love that emanates from the performers and volunteers and the love

that is returned from the guests and the staff." Her 25th anniversary message comes from a quote from the Broadway show, Wicked: "Because I knew you, I was changed for good."

>>> Eileen Moon's great-

est gift to Holiday Express may have been her coining of the organization's motto: Delivering the Gift of Human Kindness. She recalls, "In November of 1993, Tim McLoone asked me to attend the very first meeting of local musicians he'd invited to be part of his as-yetunnamed traveling holiday band. He had been writing an occasional column at the time for The Two River Times, where I was then working as



a reporter. He suggested that I do a story on the group that would possibly attract some other professional musicians. It seemed like a crazy, beautiful idea, reminiscent of old Andy Hardy movies and Bob Hope's USO tours. After accompanying Tim and the musicians he'd handpicked to the very first show in Stamford, Connecticut, I saw the incredible magic of Holiday Express being born. They were performing in a dilapidated school gym in the middle of a neglected, downtrodden pocket of the city. The clients were in a program to support teenage parents and their children with a variety of educational and social services. The parents were teenagers; the children ranged in age from newborn to approximately five years old. The expressions on their faces seemed to say that life was serious, and dangerous, and hard not something that a bunch of suburban do-gooders would necessarily have any business knowing about. But when the music started, little miracles began to happen. Band members who were there then will tell you that they didn't play well, that the sound was awful, and some of them wondered what the heck they were doing there. What I remember is the transformation; seeing these somber teen parents and their little ones lift their hearts for a little while and share something joyful and silly and fun." Besides creating the perfect Holiday Express tagline. she also suggested the name 'Giving Partner' to describe those who provide the 'wish list' donations for client organizations. She was also a line volunteer, riding the bus and helping with unloading supplies, serving food, painting faces, and holding hands, and says, "Being part of Holiday Express was enlightening on many levels. Visiting hospitals, shelters, developmental centers, etc. opened the door wide on the realities behind the stereotypical images we have of people whose lives are profoundly different from our own. I learned to see the human being behind their circumstance, to be less afraid of difference, and to share some things that have no price - smiles, laughter, a little music, a little joy." Eileen has yet another phrase to add as Holiday Express heads into the next 25 years. "As the song says, "Let your little light shine. Let your little light shine. There may be someone, down in the valley, trying to get home."





HOLIDAY EXPRESS Through the Years

NOVEMBER 15, 1993

- First meeting. Tim McLoone shared with friends his vision of visiting those less fortunate and centering it around music.
- The name Holiday Express is chosen. The Travelling Jingleberries was the runner-up!

DECEMBER 1993 – 10 Events

- First-ever event is held on December 5 at Better Beginnings in Stamford, CT, a safe haven for very young single mothers.
- The organization includes approximately 15 volunteer musicians and 15 support members.
- Wrapped gifts are given.
- The first fundraising concert is held at the Tradewinds in Sea Bright, NJ.

1994 SEASON - 17 Events

- 30 musicians and 20 volunteers
- Gift bags are given out instead of wrapped gifts.
- Delicious Orchards in Colts Neck, NJ donates apple cider and donuts, as feeding the guests becomes an essential part of every event.
- Bruce Springsteen joins Holiday Express onstage at Tradewinds during a fundraiser.
- First Red Bank Tree Lighting appearance

1995 SEASON - 20 Events

- Holiday Express becomes a registered 501 (c)(3) organization.
- First "warehouse" is set up: a trailer parked in the Rum Runner parking lot in Sea Bright, NJ.
- 1,200 gift bags are packed.
- Holiday Express performs for more than 5,000 handicapped children in a Continental Airlines hanger at Newark International Airport for a program called Community Mayors, where Santa pulls into the hanger in a 747 jet.

1996 SEASON - 26 Events

- Holiday Express makes a weekend Today Show appearance, its first national television exposure.
- First time the "12 Days of Christmas" is performed, at the Sea Bright, NJ Tree Lighting

1997 SEASON - 27 Events

- First CD, Holiday Express: Delivered, is released.
- First visit to a homeless shelter: St. Paul's in Paterson, NJ, with approximately 50 men in attendance

- First WPLJ radio appearance at Blythedale Children's Hospital
- First fundraising dinner dance is held, at the Shore Casino in Atlantic Highlands, NJ.
- Comcast broadcasts the Holiday Express Tradewinds Concert.

1998 SEASON - 34 Events

- Junior volunteers join the gift bag packing ranks.
- The Corporate Partners Program, now known as the Giving Partners Program, begins.
- Second CD, Holiday Express: Greatest Hits, is released.
- Debut of "The Full Santa," a.k.a. Disco Santa, takes place at the dinner dance.
- Holiday Express makes the first of three performances at the Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree Lighting in NYC, broadcast live on NBC.
- The first benefit concert at the Count Basie Theatre in Red Bank, NJ is held.

1999 SEASON - 34 Events

- Jersey Mike's Subs comes onboard and a long partnership that continues today – is born.
- The single "Disco Santa" a reworked version of the Village People's classic, "Y.M.C.A." receives national radio airplay.
- Holiday Express visits St. John's Soup Kitchen for the first time.
- Holiday Express travels to Littleton, CO to perform for the families affected by the tragic Columbine High School shooting.

2000 SEASON - 39 Events

- First employee hired: Amy Robinson, as Director of Operations
- Benefit concert is held at the Continental Airlines Arena in NJ.
- The Grinch makes his first appearance.

2001 SEASON - 48 Events

- A documentary, Rock and a Heart Place, is produced by Mike Sodano and Nancy Sabino and filmed during the season.
- Holiday Express Live CD is released.
- 11,000 gift bags are packed.
- An event is held at Christian Brothers Academy in Lincroft, NJ for the families of the World Trade Center tragedy.
- Families affected by the events of September 11th are special guests at the Continental Airlines Arena benefit, where Bruce Springsteen and others join Holiday Express onstage.

2002 SEASON - 50 Events

- First Big Joe Henry Show at Jenkinson's in Point Pleasant, NJ, with Southside Johnny, Gary U.S. Bonds, and many others
- First Sickles Wine and Cheese benefit is held.

2003 SEASON - 50 Events

- A new CD, Home for the Holidays, is released.
- Benefit concert is held at Convention Hall in Asbury Park, NJ.
- First Golf Classic is held at Manasquan River Golf Club in Brielle, NJ.
- Feed the Hungry Concert at the Stony Pony in July

2004 SEASON - 50 Events

- Holiday Express moves to 968 Shrewsbury Avenue in Tinton Falls, NJ.
- Jon Bon Jovi performs with Holiday Express at Blythedale Children's Hospital, which is aired live on WPLJ's Scott & Todd Show.

2005 SEASON - 55 Events

- 15,000 gift bags are distributed.
- First benefit concert is held at NJPAC in Newark, NJ.
- St. Mark's Soup Kitchen in Keansburg, NJ receives a "makeover."
- Holiday Express visits areas in Louisiana and Mississippi devastated by Hurricane Katrina.

2006 SEASON - 50 Events

• 500th performance is held, at Eva's Village in Paterson, NJ.

2007 SEASON - 54 Events

- More than 600 volunteers sing, pack, and give hugs.
- Three proms are hosted outside the season, at Matheny, CP Passaic, and Millburn Schools.
- Trinity Church Soup Kitchen in Asbury Park, NJ is added on Christmas Eve.

2008 SEASON - 53 Events

- Event for the New Jersey National Guard families of those deployed to the Middle East is held at Convention Hall in Asbury Park, NJ.
- The first Holiday Express Clambake is held on the beach in Sea Bright, NJ.

2009 SEASON - 47 Events

- Toys "R" Us unsuccessfully attempts to use the Holiday Express name for their seasonal holiday.
- Holiday Express performs for the NJ National Guard troops at Sovereign Bank Arena in Trenton at their homecoming.

2010 SEASON - 50 Events

- 700th performance is held, at A. Harry Moore School in Jersey City, NJ.
- NBC Nightly News spotlights Holiday Express on the "Making a Difference" segment reported by Natalie Morales.

2011 SEASON - 55 Events

• Happy Holidays, Holiday Express' fourth CD, is released.

2012 SEASON - 60 Events

- A third Christmas Eve location is added, at St. Ann's Soup Kitchen in Newark, NJ.
- The 20th anniversary season ends with the 817th performance of Holiday Express.

2013 SEASON - 63 Events

- McLoone's Restaurants donates more than 2,500 "sit-down" holiday meals
- Events performed in 7 states to date"

2014 SEASON - 68 Events

- Don Pignataro retires after ten remarkable years and Lorrie Klaric joins Holiday Express as the new Executive Director.
- Soul and R&B singer Ben E. King makes his final appearance before his passing in April 2015.

2015 SEASON - 81 Events

• 1,000th Holiday Express event, where several of the "originals" joined Tim McLoone at NJEDDA in Clifton.

2016 SEASON - 90 Events

• First Holiday in the Park performance at Six Flags Great Adventure

2017 SEASON - 100 Events

- Nearly 18,000 gift bags and 2,500 volunteers, including 150 professional musicians
- 15th Annual Holiday Express Golf Classic is held.
- Rock and Roll Hall of Fame member Darlene Love, original singer of the Holiday Express theme song "All Alone on Christmas" that was written by Steven Van Zandt, is a special honoree at the 10th Annual Holiday Express Sunset Benefit Clambake.



TIM McLOONE

The Heart, the Healing, and the Hello Behind

HOLIDAY EXPRESS

his fall, it will be 25 years since Tim McLoone first decided to form a traveling holiday band; one that would play for free in the kinds of places that never seemed to get much attention during the holidays. Over the course of these past 25 years, Holiday Express has grown from a handful of helpers to more than 150 musicians and thousands of other volunteers who plan and manage events, pack gift bags, load vans, don costumes, paint faces, serve food, play games, hold hands, and then - do it all over again, day after day.

In its first year, Holiday Express did ten shows. In 2017, they presented 100. Each year, the organization must raise \$1.5 million in cash and in-kind contributions to pay for it all. Is it worth it? Ask any volunteer, including Tim. "No one ever leaves Holiday Express," he says. "It's too rewarding." Now 70, Tim has no intention of leaving, either. Holiday Express has a strong board, a committed family of volunteers, and a mission that is unlikely to become obsolete.

"The first five years, we were, in a sense,

very proud of ourselves that we were doing this nice thing," Tim explains. But he has come to see the mission of Holiday Express as a two-way street. "I think that by doing this grand gesture, doing these extravagant things for people, we came to understand that we were receiving like crazy."

It took the group a few years to find the places they were needed most. "People have the misconception that we play mostly to children," he notes. "But we really play more for what I call 'adult orphans,' such as people in residential psychiatric facilities where many will spend their entire lives. They've lost the concept of home and family. Their dream is to end up in a group home."

Today, Holiday Express has two primary selection criteria for the agencies it visits. "One, if we were not there, you got little or nothing at all at holiday time," Tim states. "Or, two: Your need is so great that we don't care if you're getting a lot of attention. We're happy to be part of it."

At A. Harry Moore School in Jersey

City, he says, "The children are so ill, and there's a lot of poverty. Every year, we see the same caregivers, holding onto little ones. And some of those kids die every year." The experiences are eye-opening. "We've been allowed into a world where we observe human suffering in a positive atmosphere. The courage and kindness of the caregivers Holiday Express has encountered never ceases to amaze me."

One year, at the New Lisbon Developmental Center, Tim noticed a caregiver maneuvering a push crate holding a large, profoundly disabled man. "She included him in everything that we did." When he praised her for her outstanding efforts after the show, she responded, "I love my job. If I was ever told I wasn't allowed to work here for some reason, I'd be heartbroken." "We hear that over and over," Tim says.

On December 21, 2015, Holiday Express presented its 1,000th show at NJEDDA High School in Clifton. "Cerebral Palsy is like an atomic bomb going off in a family," explains Tim, whose own



nephew, Steven, had CP as a consequence of having been briefly deprived of oxygen at birth. At the NJEDDA High School, most of the kids can't communicate and are not ambulatory. And yet, he adds, "The love in that room is palpable. You can actually feel it. I struggle to keep my composure while I'm there."

Each December, the band visits Blythedale Children's Hospital in Valhalla, New York, joining WCBS-FM radio host Scott Shannon and several celebrities for an on-air show. Twenty-five-year-old outpatient Lanie Pearce is a huge music fan who has Cerebral Palsy. She always sits as close as she can to the broadcast stage. When she sees Tim, "she gets very excited and flails around in her wheelchair," he smiles. But when she catches sight of Rob Thomas, former front man of Matchbox 20, "She practically flips herself out of her chair."

It is Lanie who is responsible for the most startling individual moment Tim has experienced in Holiday Express. A year ago, he received an email he didn't recognize. "Hi, Tim – It's Lanie," the email read. "Lanie who?" he asked. "Lanie from Blythedale," she told him. After they'd been exchanging emails for a while, Tim asked her, "We're friends, right?" Lanie agreed. "Can I ask you how you're doing this?" he inquired. "With my eyes," Lanie told him. With the help of assistive speech technology, Lanie can now "type" with her eyes. "It's been an astonishing relationship," he says. "I hear from her every day now. She's smart, she's funny, she's sarcastic, and, sometimes, she's angry, just like we all are."

At some point in the Holiday Express journey, Tim came to a realization that forever changed his understanding of Holiday Express. "I realized we were all healing ourselves - everybody in Holiday Express. We were healing from all the things that happened in our own lives. I wasn't thinking about those things when we started." For 48 days each year, members of Holiday Express are reminded at every stop that no human being can be defined by their limitations; that what each of us needs is more understanding, not more judgment, he states. "We've all been educated. My kids will tell you - if we're walking on the boardwalk and somebody comes along in a wheelchair, I'm going over and saying hello."

Twenty-five years later, the healing continues, as Holiday Express delivers – and receives – countless joyful, emotional, and meaningful hugs of hello.



How to Express the Magic of HOLIDAY EXPRESS?

The nearly indescribable magic of a Holiday Express event often leaves people speechless. Unless, of course, they graciously choose to share with us their thoughts about their experience. Each season, we are overjoyed and humbled to read the outpouring of cards, letters, emails, and online comments from both quests and volunteers alike, just a few of which appear here.





From Our Event Guests and Families

You and your talented band of merrymakers have brought the precious gift of yourselves, your music, and your unbridled enthusiasm to students who are often challenged by seasonal celebrations. Without hesitation, the cheerful elves move through the audience, holding a hand, coaxing a smile, and conveying, without even a word to the students, "Yes, this is for you...this is about you...be happy...you are special...you are valued...you are loved." And always, the tears stream down my face and I think how blessed we are to know you. - Venus D. Majeski, Director of **Development & Community Relations, NJID**

I just love what Holiday Express is all about. I pray that many others can have this experience of unconditional love shown their way. Thank you for putting love in action! - Wayne Branch, Athletic **Director, Jespy House**

Holiday Express had such a positive effect on our students. The volunteers engaged each and every student to make them feel special and appreciated, and ensured that all the students in attendance were valued. Your generosity was overwhelming. Robin Bauer, Adult Program Coordinator, FRA

Holiday Express brought pure joy and happiness, with dignity and thoughtfulness in even the smallest details. It may not seem like much to someone who takes these things for granted, but our clients don't have many opportunities to go out with friends and their families don't always have a chance to see them just having fun with their peers, so two hours of pure bliss, fun, and engagement is truly moving and an amazing gift. Thank you. - Kim Rushmore, Director, Spectrum for Living

How can I ever thank you enough? The shelter guests of Joseph's House are wearing the hats and gloves and wearing smiles that are still beaming. For so many of them, the Holiday Express party absolutely made their Christmas. I've heard over and over again how nicely they were treated, how kind you all were, how great the music was, and what a gift it was to put down their troubles and enjoy a good time. – John Klein, Joseph's House

As a parent, words of gratitude seem inadequate for the feelings of pure joy that you bring every year. Thank you for your compassion, understanding, and continued generosity to our community. - Colleen Rose

From Our Volunteers

I felt like I was reawakened to volunteering. The joy on the faces of the children and young adults at the events is so beautiful, it makes me come back for more to spread that joy further. – Nancy L.

This is absolutely the best thing I do all year. I do it to give back, but I cannot explain the joy in my heart that I receive from spending time with Holiday Express! Holiday Express is my superhero! **– Robin R.**

Just to see the sheer happiness is truly what the season is about. If you have never volunteered for Holiday Express, put it on your "must do" list! – **Dorry W.**

I felt I had just helped make something very extraordinary happen and I couldn't wait to do it again. ~ Matt S.

I felt like I had done something good, really good, for my fellow man. – Mark M.

My cheeks hurt from smiling, my eyes stung from tears, and my heart burst with joy. – **Beth S.**

I have volunteered all my life, but this was something extra magical. – Barbara W.

It was just so great to talk to staff, teachers, and administrators before the show and telling them to prepare to have their socks knocked off - and then watch their reaction as their kids danced and sang and responded to the band, our volunteers, Elmo, Cookie Monster, Rudolph, and Santa. – Kate B.

I absolutely love being involved with this organization. We try to be a blessing to others, but little did I know how much I'm being blessed by the people we see! – Tarika J.

I have been a volunteer for a long time, from the grassroots beginnings, and by giving of ourselves to less fortunate individuals, I can say I have gotten more out of it emotionally than I could ever give. If not for the grace of God, it could be Holiday Express giving me the gift of kindness. To understand this glorious feeling I'm talking about, volunteer and do something kind because you can, and see for yourself.— **Frank M.**











THANKS FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT!

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Additional thanks to all our Golf Classic auction contributors!

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2017 GIVING PARTNERS: A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

Would you like to feel the joy of giving a personalized gift to the groups that we visit? The Holiday Express Giving Partner Program allows individuals, businesses, or groups to select "wish list" items, at various price points, that each organization is invited to suggest and which they could not otherwise afford. Look for each season's updated Giving Partner wish list on the Holiday Express website!



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WONDERFUL WAYS TO LEND SUPPORT

ur mission of delivering music, food, gifts, financial support, and friendship to those with the greatest need for the gift of human kindness - at no expense to the individuals or organizations we visit - is a challenge we do not take lightly. In reality, being able to present a season of unforgettable events and to provide all the amenities that go along with them comes at a cost, both in funds and in hands-on effort. We obtain no government funding and all that we do is made possible through the kind and generous contributions of our partners and donors, as well as the work of our enthusiastic volunteers, who know so well that in giving, they receive.

There are many needs and just as many ways to give and lend support to the Holiday Express mission. Perhaps you will be inspired by some of the following ideas.

RECURRING DONATION – Become a "Bright Light" by making a monthly donation to Holiday Express. A gift of just \$5 a month offers three low-income families winter gear; \$10 a month gives 35 critically ill children cuddly stuffed toys to hug as they fall asleep each night; \$20 a month provides ten veterans with complete gift bags: each duffle bag filled with a knit hat, gloves, socks, wash cloth, and toiletry kits that will help them stay healthy and warm; and \$85 a month provides bus transportation to bring musicians and Holiday Express Elves to a long-term psychiatric center to visit critically ill patients in need of hope.

MATCHING GIFTS - Does your employer have a matching gift program or will they make a donation for the valuable hours you donate to Holiday Express? Check with your human resource department to find out!

DONATE YOUR OLD VEHICLE - Wondering what to do with your old car, boat, or motorcycle? Donating your vehicle to Holiday Express is convenient, easy, and may qualify you for a tax deduction. Your donation will make a big difference in supporting Holiday Express. Complete our simple online form or call us, and we'll take care of the rest.

EMPLOYEE AND COMMUNITY GIVING DRIVES - Help us fill Holiday Express gift bags! By coordinating a drive to collect toothbrushes, toothpaste, wash cloths, and warm socks, you will help us keep our costs to a minimum, while introducing your friends and co-workers to Holiday Express. This project is ideal for students, scouts, and youth groups working on community service hours, businesses seeking team-building projects, volunteer organizations looking for worthwhile projects, or friends and neighbors getting together to make a difference!

IN-KIND DONATIONS - Collaboration plays an important role in the success of Holiday Express. Each year, we work with many groups and corporations whose in-kind donations - including meals, truck rental, shampoo, soap, generator rental, packing boxes, graphic design work, tents, radio air time, bottles of water, blankets, and more - help us to keep costs low, while providing our partners an opportunity to give back to the community in which they work and live.

ONE-TIME DONATION – Holiday Express runs on the support of the community, and every person - every dollar - counts. Donations are a unique and thoughtful way to honor or remember someone special in your life, who will receive a grateful acknowledgement from Holiday Express for your generosity.

PLANNED GIVING – Leave behind a meaningful legacy at Holiday Express. With a little planning, you can assist those who are often forgotten. There are a number of options to consider with your estate planning that will have a direct impact on those we serve.

SPONSOR A FUNDRAISING EVENT – Each year, Holiday Express hosts just a few major fundraising events, which help fuel our mission and raise awareness to the public. They include the Holiday Express Golf Classic, the Sunset Benefit Clambake, and two benefit concerts at the Count Basie Theatre. All four events offer sponsorship packages at various price points.



ADOPT A CHARITY EVENT - Each Holiday Express charity event costs an average of \$6,500; money well spent when you realize ours is, most often, the only holiday program offered at the organizations we visit. Your group or company can adopt a charity event, covering the event costs. A special thank you to everyone who adopted an event in 2017, including:

Christopher Center for Mental Health & Wellness......CPC Behavioral Health & Unity Place Cohen Family OceanFirst Foundation Carol Stillwell and Mary Ann Larkin Trudy and Charlie Parton Spengler Family......CVR Sheldon and Anne Vogel Rosie and Bill Catalano Dawn and Joe Walsh

.Eva's Village ..LADACIN Lehmann & Scroth Schools Easter Seals ..Alpha School .FRA ...Transportation to Veteran's Haven North Transportation to St. Francis Inn & Thank-a-Vet

MAKING IT COUNT with HOLIDAY EXPRESS



18 VISIT US ONLINE AT WWW.HOLIDAYEXPRESS.ORG AND ON

BUT WAIT! THERE'S MORE!

Ithough the vast majority of Holiday Express events take place at private facilities from early November through December 24, the warm weather months bring two opportunities to enjoy spectacular events that help us to raise both awareness and funds to make the holiday season possible. Mark your calendars and get ready to join the festivities, as everyone is cordially invited to attend this year's Holiday Express Golf Classic and Holiday Express Sunset Benefit Clambake! Each of these annual celebrations promises to sell out, with hundreds of guests turning out for unsurpassed fun and entertainment.

The 16th Annual Holiday Express Golf Classic will take place on Monday, July 16. The outing will once again be held at the elegant Manasquan River Golf Club in Brielle, NJ. The registration fee of \$450 for each player includes green fees, cart, a forecaddie for each foursome, golfer's gift, on-course refreshments, gourmet goodies at the halfway house, a delectable lunch, a scrumptious cocktail reception and awards dinner, silent auction prizes, and entertainment. Not a golfer? Not a problem! Non-golfers are welcome to attend the cocktail reception and dinner at the end of





the day. Various sponsorship opportunities are also available, presenting a great way to showcase your business or organization, along with your support. Round up your foursome and come out for a great day on the greens!

Then, on Sunday, September 16, we will bid farewell to summer at the 11th Annual Holiday Express Sunset Benefit Clambake. This extraordinary extravaganza takes place on the beach at McLoone's Pier House in

Long Branch, NJ, where attendees will gather under an enormous, elaborate tent with picturesque views of the shoreline. No gowns or tuxedos needed for this gala event; instead, guests are encouraged to show up in comfortable, casually chic sandals, shorts, and sundresses to party in the sand! With tickets priced at \$250, this lavish affair features an endless buffet with a seafood raw bar, lobster, filet mignon, premium open bar, and more, as well as an awesome array of auction prizes and a generous cash raffle. Throughout the evening, there will be dancing and musical entertainment by the talented Holiday Express Band. Sponsorships and journal ads are available and auction item donations are needed to help make this another tremendous success. The more, the merrier, so why not put together a table of family and friends?

For reservations, donations, sponsorships, or more information on these and other Holiday Express events, call 732-544-8010 or visit **www.holidayexpress.org.**

VISIT US ONLINE AT WWW.HOLIDAYEXPRESS.ORG AND ON



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SAVE THE DATES!

JULY 16 ANNUAL GOLF CLASSIC



SEPTEMBER 16 SUNSET BENEFIT CLAMBAKE







Celebrating Our 25TH ANNIVERSARY of DELIVERING THE GIFT OF HUMAN KINDNESS



