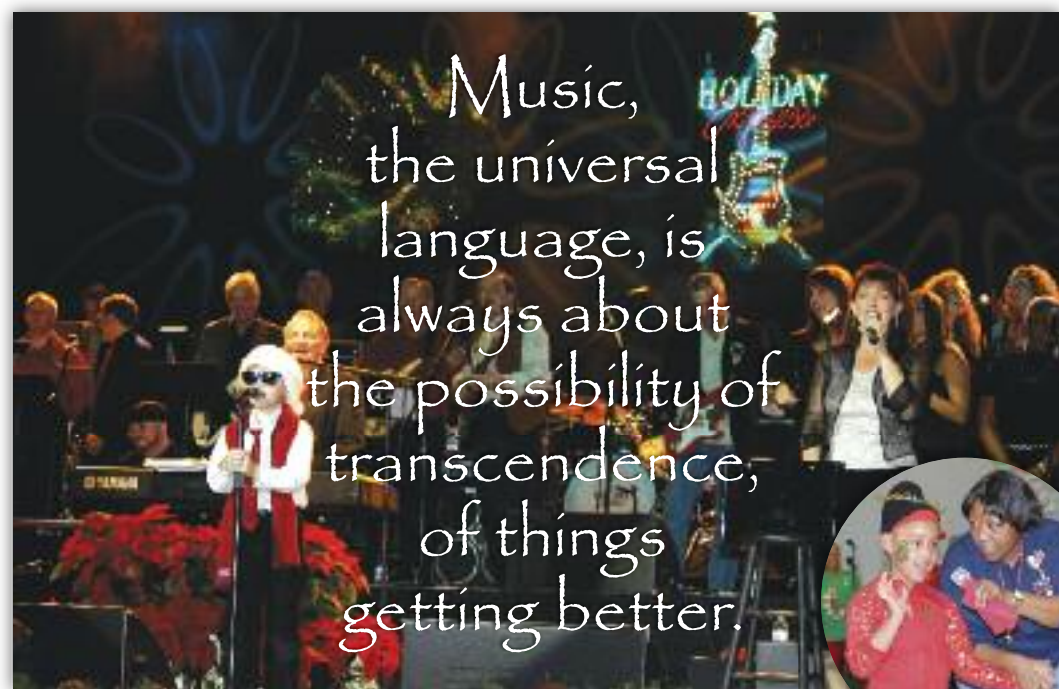


# Volunteers Delivering the Gift of Human Kindness

Holiday Express Yearbook

Season 2009



**By Ashley Hadar**

"(Your Love Keeps Lifting Me) Higher and Higher," the classic R&B hit by Jackie Wilson, is performed in full force by the Holiday Express band. The singers walk between the aisles, the sax players are blowing their horns. The crowd is either dancing or swaying in their seats and everyone is singing along. Costumed elves are giving hugs and smiles, holding hands. The energy and excitement in the room is mesmerizing.

A Holiday Express event is like being on an emotional roller coaster. One minute you are dancing and smiling, and the next minute you are trying as hard as you can to hold back your tears. To try and put a tattoo on someone's deformed, yet beautiful face, while trying to keep your hand from shaking. To smile into someone's sad eyes and hold their hand while happy tears roll down their face. To keep on giving hugs to people who can't move a muscle.

Music, the universal language, is always about the possibility of transcendence, of things getting better. It helps uplift from sad and heartbreaking circumstances into a moment which grows into two hours of transformation, and infuses anyone with the strength to carry on. The music draws us all together as a community, erasing all our differences, and making us all the same.

To see the big smiles and pure happiness etched on so many faces made my 2009 Holiday Season the best one yet. I grew up believing that giving, sharing and volunteering are a part of human nature. We are social creatures that need and rely on others. Giving to others, if it is a hug or just a smile, leaves you with a warm feeling, a boost in energy and overall happier mood.

*Continued on Page 4*





## A NOTE from the President

This year's Holiday Express season was, as always, a memorable one. Has it ever not been? The stresses on the nation's economy have certainly reached down and impacted many of our "clients." Budget cuts, home foreclosures, health services cutbacks, etc, have all conspired to make these good peoples' desperate situations all the more so. Having said that, we were once again incredibly impressed by the positive attitudes we encountered everywhere we went. I honestly don't know how some of these folks can summon that up. So, it remains our joyful task to begin preparations for 2010, our 18th season. We will surpass our 700th event during this year which, as I look at it now, seems unbelievable to me. All of you are the people who make it go and, for that, we thank you.

**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

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 Contributing Editors – Donald Pignataro, Amy Broza, Peg Ford, Ashley Hadar, Donna Edington, Phyllis McQuillan, Christine Mosher, Barbara Willis  
 Photos by Scott Longfield, Russ Pangborn and Friends of Holiday Express

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

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## A Message from Donald Pignataro, Executive Director



For 17 years, Holiday Express, a charitable family of 1500+ volunteers, has been lifting the human spirit of those in need. The challenges of the past two years re-emphasized that it is critical for us to amplify what it takes to carry out our mission, so more people will recognize that contributing to Holiday Express has a very real impact on the lives we touch.

The economic landscape changed and being an organization that is supported entirely through charitable giving, we experienced a significant decrease in contributions. Although the economic sentiment made it a very challenging time for us, we continued to receive considerable financial and in-kind gifts from many loyal, and even new, supporters throughout the community for which we are extremely grateful.

We did not compromise our programs and we carried out our mission to the delight of more than 15,000 special friends and families. Again, 50 events in 30 days were accomplished through the magnificent and heroic efforts of our volunteers. Hours and hours of hands-on labor, countless personal emotions and compassionate feelings are genuinely extended by our outstanding volunteers. We are truly awed by the selfless acts of kindness quietly performed for the good of those in need.

Each year we receive hundreds of letters from the people we visit (see Pages 6-7). The following is an excerpt from one of those letters that reinforces that what we do is worth it...

"I have a 15-year-old autistic son. He attends school at Children's Center of Monmouth County. Two years ago Holiday Express performed at the school and my son was given the gift of a beautiful knapsack, besides other items. This year Holiday Express performed and gave my son the gifts of a hat, scarf and gloves along with other items. It meant so much for my son to see this wonderful presentation; however the gifts were the icing on the cake. God has granted me the ability to care for my autistic child as necessary; however, there are so many children at his school who barely have the clothes on their back."

Even during these most difficult times, Holiday Express has not wavered in our commitment to those who rely on us. For the 15,000 individuals, children and families whose lives we were able to touch during the 2009 holiday season, Holiday Express is extremely appreciative of the open-hearted gifts we receive from our volunteers and supporters. Your generosity has helped sustain us throughout a tough year and we are grateful.



## Holiday Express 2009 Benefit Clambake

By Amy Broza



Everyone could say was "WOW!" People strolling along the boardwalk and walking on the sand stopped in their tracks to wonder what glamorous event had come to Long Branch on this late summer eve. The size and shape of the exotic tent was straight out of Aladdin, and set against a picture-perfect sunset – the view was breathtaking. The 2nd Annual Holiday Express Clambake was literally the talk of the town!

Indeed, the evening was the perfect combination of countless volunteer hours, and more than a little touch of Mother Nature. In a word – spectacular.

If you thought "clambake" meant roasting a few on some hot coals while enjoying a beer or two, think again. We do things a little differently in Holiday Express. This is the fundraising event you can't wait to attend. It's top of the line from the tantalizing food, to the impeccable service by the Pier House staff, to the casually elegant atmosphere. Add the Holiday Express band – with some of the Jersey Shore's finest musicians – and you can't help but have a blast. Nothing like black tie quality in Jersey seashore comfort! Oh yeah...did I mention that you get to wear your shorts and Hawaiian shirts? Now...that's a party!

That evening, our guests had the chance to wine and dine in style and comfort. Truthfully, it's not unlike the experience Holiday Express brings to every event during our "50 shows in 30 days" Christmas season. We offer something special – and often indescribable – to our favorite people. It's the kind of good time, camaraderie and joy of sharing that happens when people of good hearts come together.

So if you marveled at our Clambake extraordinaire from outside the exotic tent last year, please come join this year's party on September 19, 2010.

Mingle...dine...dance...and enjoy a little oasis at the Jersey Shore. Share a Holiday Express moment.

(1) Couple descending down the "runway" to the mysterious tent on the sand; (2) Jim Mizell, Bob Boyd, Russ Pangborn; (3) Crystal Star Award Winner Paul Diomedea; (4) Lobsters galore, thanks to the generosity of donor Brooks Seafood; (5) Tim McLoone; (6) Adjutant General Glenn Rieth, Jill Weiss, Brigadier General James Grant; (7) Santa Russ Pangborn in his summer suit! (8) Raffle table; (9) Kim and Bob Honecker, Maggie Dorato and Doug Raynor; (10) Donald Pignataro with Auction Co-Chairs: Laurie Vilardi, Jana Beal and Diane Baldwin; (11) Leslie Smith, Mary Rose Van Wouldenberg and Bob Smith.



### Music, the Universal Language

My name is Ashley and in addition to being a Holiday Express Volunteer, I am lucky to have the best job in the world. I simultaneously began volunteering and working full time at the Holiday Express headquarters this past summer. My job description consists of doing anything and everything to help insure that the well-oiled machine that is Holiday Express continues to operate smoothly.

I was born in Israel, the oldest of four siblings. We have two loving parents who have happily been living in China for the past few years. I spent my growing-up years traveling and living all over the world. I served in the Israeli army, graduated NYU and had a variety of interesting jobs. I have always lived by the motto that "life is too short and you should try and enjoy every day."

I have a son named Roey Johnathan, which in Hebrew means God gave me my Shepherd. Roey was the one who led me to Holiday Express. We had moved to the Jersey Shore six years ago, after finding this area on the map. I had just sold my company and wanted to retire by the ocean, close to New York City.



Ashley Hadar



Roey Hadar

When we moved to Monmouth County, we did not know anyone in this area, or anything about it, and had never heard of Holiday Express. Through Roey's school and his wonderful and committed teacher, Jane Denny, Roey became an official Holiday Express Junior Volunteer. My only involvements with local charities consisted of purchasing tickets for local events (180 Turning Lives Around gala and Make-A-Wish Foundation polo match), and dropping Roey off at the warehouse.

This past summer I received an e-mail stating that Holiday Express was looking to hire someone to help in the office. As I learned more about the organization, I knew that I found my true calling. This is what I wanted to do and I was very lucky to apply and actually get the job of my dreams.

Tracy Chapman wrote, "I've seen and met angels wearing the disguise of ordinary people living ordinary lives." Holiday Express is the place where you are surrounded by all those angels, and I have found the place to "lift me higher and higher."

## Shore Point Distributing Company – A Sure Thing

By Christine Mosher



The economic downturn has made things difficult for us all. At times, it has been particularly challenging for Holiday Express to maintain our resources and continue giving to those who need it most.

Though, through the generosity that surrounds us, we have been able to overcome what, at times, seemed like not very good odds.

Through the support of dedicated and compassionate individuals and businesses in the community, we have been able to continue to make a difference in so many lives, even in this difficult economic time.

One company whose continued support and generosity has made the challenges we are up against a little easier to face, is the one and only Shore Point Distributing Company.

"We want to be there for those who need help in the community, not for the notoriety but to strengthen the mission of the organization, said Gerry Fiorella, V.P. Sales and Marketing. "Our involvement in the community is beyond just a sale of our products."

Throughout the past five years, this third-generation, family-owned beer distributor has been a devoted supporter of the Holiday Express mission. From the Red Bank Town Lighting and Holiday Express Concert, to the Holiday Express Golf Classic and

then the Clambake – they have not missed a beat. And, if those contributions weren't quite enough, they have recently partnered with Holiday Express on a new wine venture, Holly Crest Wines. Through this new program, Shore Point is donating a portion of proceeds from all sales of Holly Crest Wines to the Holiday Express organization through November 2010.

"We are excited about the program. Not only does it bring awareness to the wonderful wines of Holly Crest, but it gives us another avenue to work with Holiday Express," said Tony Thornton, Division Manager.

Through this unique program, Shore Point – said to be a company built on kindness – once again is helping Holiday Express deliver gifts, love, laughter and music to those in need.

Holiday Express Founder, Tim McLoone said, "It has been the devout support received from Shore Point and others, that has allowed Holiday Express to put smiles on the faces of those less fortunate, year after year."

"We want to thank all of our supporters, and Shore Point in particular, for helping us continue to make a difference and give back to the community."



## The Lyons VA

# All Events Are Not Created Equal

By Barbara Willis

HOLIDAY EXPRESS events follow a tried and true formula: one part music and one part boundless energy. Some events also



Maureen Staub

add food, as well as crafts and other activities, to this successful equation.

It might seem then that every event would be somewhat the same. However, the reality is that the clients determine how events will unfold.

An example is The Lyons House – Center of Recovery and Hope, Department of Veterans Affairs, in Basking Ridge. This facility was on the schedule several years ago, but was dropped because the mostly geriatric clients did not seem to enjoy what Holiday Express had to offer. Thanks to longtime Holiday Express angel, volunteer Maureen Staub, we decided to try again in 2009.

The clients this time were a mix of men and women, ranging in age from 19 to 90, who represented World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam, Kosovo, Somalia, the First Gulf War the Second Gulf War and more. Most suffered from mental and emotional trauma related to their war-time service, and a small number had physical disabilities requiring the use of canes, wheelchairs or walkers.

"We planned on about 180 men and 30 women from The Lyons House," says Barry Lewin, who co-managed the event with Ray DiStefano.

Additionally, about 50 clients from Jespy House, a program for people with learning and developmental disabilities, attended

the event. Combining the two groups proved to be a stroke of genius, since the Jespy clients literally broke the ice.



Barry and Loren Lewin

"The crowd of veterans was initially somewhat stunned," notes Barry. "Apparently it is unusual for any group to visit them. They have sacrificed and yet no one stops by to say thanks...and here we come with about 15 musicians, a troupe of caring volunteers, food and gift bags that were stacked along the entire length of the wall. Frankly, they didn't know what to make of it."

Fortunately, the Jespy clients, who know Holiday Express well, jumped right in... and the veterans soon got the hang of it.

The staging of the event was marked by an exceptional spirit of teamwork. A number of veterans, who work as staff for the facility as part of their transition into society, pitched in wherever needed – including bringing equipment and food from the parking lot and setting up tables



Michelle Smith and Kathie Sterzinar

and chairs. One of the older vets also delivered what Tim McLoone, founder of Holiday Express who led the band that day, called "a simple and eloquent prayer that moved everyone."

Two musical moments also stood out at this event: an inspiring performance of "God Bless America" by Layonne Holmes, and a solo rendition of "The Christmas Song" by one of the veterans.

Several staff members followed up with appreciative e-mails and, at the event itself, many veterans personally thanked the Holiday Express volunteers.

One Vietnam veteran, a recovering drug addict whose family had disowned him years ago, said the event was "his Christmas" – and the best one he ever had. Calling the people from Holiday Express "angels," he promised to become a Holiday Express volunteer himself in 2010.

If The Lyons House – Center of Recovery and Hope experience proved anything, it is that Holiday Express events are like Christmas gifts. You never know what you're going to get until you take off the wrapping.



Layonne Holmes



# LETTERS! We Get Letters!

## WE GET LOTS AND LOTS OF LETTERS!

December 20, 2009

Dear Holiday Express,

We've just had a huge snowfall with the world truly looking like a winter wonderland, church has been cancelled, and I have decided to take the opportunity to thank all involved with Holiday Express and share my favorite personal story (so far).

This is the first year of my first-hand participation with Holiday Express and it was prompted by suggestion from high school mates who I reconnected with this summer at our Red Bank High reunion. The organization sounded great. I attended the initial introduction meeting and was ready to help at the warehouse. I tend to be a little nervous about new endeavors, so I stopped by the warehouse before official work began to introduce myself and get the lay-of-the-land. Both Don and Ashley were so welcoming; all of my questions were answered and I couldn't wait to start volunteering. Each and every time I popped in for a few hours, Ann (Robinson) greeted me – by name, how could she ever remember? – and again, I felt welcome, part of the TEAM and my efforts appreciated.

I knew now I could handle working in the warehouse, but actually going to an event and being an elf? My first one was to the Passaic County Elks Cerebral Palsy High School, and again, the team was welcoming, clear with directions, and supportive. It was a wonderful experience.



The best part of my story is about my husband Charlie and myself taking our niece, Dawn, to the Count Basie concert on December 16th. Dawn just turned 38, is significantly cognitively challenged, and is a music enthusiast extraordinaire. She plays her music CDs at home and sings along quite frequently. We knew she would love the concert so this was her birthday present from us.

I contacted Elf Ron Breuer (one of my school mates), and told him our seats were in the Loge just in case there could be interaction or a shout out for Dawn. On the bus to an event, I also asked Program Director, Donna Edington. I knew that we were in good hands.

Concert night and Dawnie has her Santa hat on with 'Dawn' written on it, and was so ready to go to the concert. We arrived early, chatted with the usher upstairs and a lovely, generous woman asked us if we would like to upgrade our tickets and accept complimentary center orchestra seats. She must have thought me to be extremely ungrateful because I was hemming and hawing about accepting them, all the while thinking that now no one would know where we were sitting and Dawn's spotting and perhaps extra attention would be lost. We accepted, down to center orchestra we went – and I must confess I had to readjust my mind set to not expecting any personal touch for Dawn because we were lost in a sea of concert goers. That's all right, the concert was going to be great.

The concert was starting and way up front I spotted Elf Ron. My attention went to the stage and before I knew it, he was standing on the arms of the seat, facing us, two rows in front of us. How could he ever have found us? Dawn lit up 'like a light bulb.' I was so happy.

Then, along came Elf Scott Lewis and he had Dawn so enthusiastic with clapping, feet stomping, singing, 'high fiving' and laughing that we all nearly had to stop for some oxygen. Such kindness and attention almost cannot be described. Santa said hi, some singers said hi. I nearly cry each time I think of it. You all brought so much happiness to Dawn and Charlie and me. Apparently, the family seated in back of Dawn shared the experience because they stopped us after the concert with smiles and observations that would warm your heart.

We continued to sing and laugh as we brought Dawnie home and she told her Dad all about it when we arrived. Her enthusiasm started the next day off and her Dad wrote a letter of explanation about her behavior to her job site (she works at the Long Branch sheltered workshop every day). I'm happy to report that apparently Dawn's happiness lasted the whole day because her employer wrote her Dad back and said she talked about the concert all day!

Can you guess what Dawn's Christmas present will be? Correct, Holiday Express Greatest Hits CD. If she wears it out from playing it so much, I know where to buy another.

Holiday Express touches folks, like the warmth of a fire in a fireplace, spreading throughout and including all. It astounds me that there are SO MANY talented singers and musicians in our area that so freely give of their time and talent. The effect of the love and energy that you all exude has brought absolute joy to my heart. Thank you for everything you do.

Blessings to all for this holiday season and for the new year through. See you next year.

Nancy Massa



TO: Don Pignataro, Holiday Express

FROM: Debbie and John

Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Months ago we saw you would be in Red Bank. My birthday is December 15 and I asked my fiancé for tickets to Holiday Express at Count Basie, which of course he purchased, not knowing what to expect. I'd explained to him what you folks did, especially with Scott & Todd. I told him how Todd had posed the question during an interview with Tim last week on the PLJ morning show, "how do you choose where to go?" Tim replied, "We look for places where, if we don't go, they will have no one, and that's where we go."

You folks were the highlight of our year! We loved the show... had a ball!! The elves were great. Admittedly, we were already in the holiday spirit, but you raised our bar just a bit more. We told our colleagues about the evening, and they asked where they could send donations.

Thank you for making our holidays bright, and more importantly, making holidays bright for those whom most have forgotten. We love you all and wish the best for all of you and your families.



A Catholic Charities Agency for the Diocese of Burlington  
"providing help, creating hope."

January 4, 2010

Holiday Express  
c/o Amy Robinson  
968 Shrewsbury Ave.  
Tinton Falls, NJ 07724

Dear Amy,

We, the Male Residential Clients here at Straight and Narrow, would like to thank you and everyone at Holiday Express for the wonderful time you provided us with your visit on the 22nd of December.

Speaking for myself, as the consequences of a past which I am working diligently to not repeat, I have had to spend too much time away from my loved ones. This is especially obvious to me during the Holiday Season, as family and community play such integral parts in many of the traditional celebrations. This time of year is known as Hurricane Season to those in recovery as Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years deliver a rapid succession of opportunities for me to succumb to loneliness as I miss out on the sense of togetherness that pervades these occasions. The event you brought to us here helped me to forget this for a time, and was an excellent example of the spirit of community and the generosity of people in general.

The gift bags you provided to us are very much appreciated, as many of these items are essentials, and many of us here do not have loved ones in our lives to help provide these things. Even more than a material gift, the spirit you brought to us in the form of a party, is without value. Thank you all so much.

With Gratitude,

Eric Torgersen  
House Representative

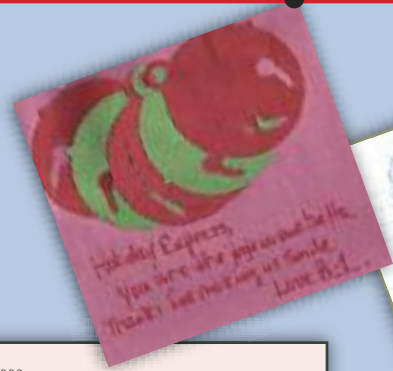
1001 Straight Street - P.O. Box 2742, Burlington, NJ 07714-0274 Phone: (908) 295-8000 Fax: (908) 295-8000 Email: [eric.torgersen@assembly.state.nj.us](mailto:eric.torgersen@assembly.state.nj.us)  
"Our attention - to every person in the world, with a special focus on the poor and people of 'ground' with the poor name."

December 8, 2009

I was at the Holiday Express show at the Jersey Shore Family Health Center on Saturday, 12/5/2009. I attended this show with the Monmouth County Association for the Blind (I was their eyes). The show was excellent and the joy and happiness of everyone present was unbelievable. It is gratifying to know that people still care about Christmas and the holy season and open their hearts and purses to help the less fortunate.

Again, thank you to Tim McLoone and Jersey Mike's for a wonderful afternoon.

Henrietta



December 8, 2009

Henrietta,

Thank you for those kind words. It's our pleasure to partner with such great people like Tim, Don, Amy and Christine and their 600+ volunteers. We attended the Red Bank Town Lighting with Holiday Express after Thanksgiving – what a great town Mayor Menna has governed.

Giving back to the communities we serve is a way of life for Peter Cancro and our staff at Jersey Mike's. And on behalf of the 410 stores nationally, we would like to thank everyone that makes this possible. Happy Holidays.

Mike Manzo  
COO



From: Holiday Express

To: Everyone

Here at the Jersey Shore in Holiday Express territory, it's easy to recognize the Jersey's Mike's Subs logo. It's everywhere!

This amazing company, headed by brothers Peter and John Cancro, have supported Holiday Express for many years with delicious subs for up to 5,000 guests a year.

And we're so grateful they go the distance for Holiday Express. However, go to their home page and see just how many charities and good causes they support nationwide.

Please, please frequent Jersey Mike's and help Holiday Express express our gratitude.

[www.jerseymikes.com](http://www.jerseymikes.com)

From: Maureen Staub, Holiday Express Event Manager  
for Children's Center of Monmouth County

To: Jim McCarthy (and his seven co-workers at Siemens)

Thank you for volunteering at the Dance Marathon at The Children's Center of Monmouth County last Thursday. Performing five shows, we definitely could have produced a Holiday Express version of SURVIVOR! By Show #4, I was ready to request I WILL SURVIVE by Gloria Gaynor to keep me going.

It was organized chaos, but we sure hit a home run as indicated by the smiles on the kids' faces. It was a show without a distinct agenda. What we did with each group evolved as the show progressed. There was a wide range of ages and "different abilities" yet every child and young adult enjoyed themselves in whatever way they could.

In the words of Paul Huegel, Holiday Express Volunteer, and often our beloved Grinch, "My son's only holiday party invitation comes from Holiday Express right here at his school. Unfortunately, most children with disabilities don't get party invitations. Christmas and Hanukkah are just dates on a calendar. Their holiday will be on the day that the Holiday Express "tour bus" pulls up and music, dancing, food and gifts will allow the joy and magic of the season to fill their lives, if just for a few hours."

I know you were touched in some way by each and every child. I think it was Irahon, our handsome soloist with glasses, who caught me. The look on his face as he stood at that microphone was pure joy and he blended right in and instantly caught on to the songs. As Tim pointed out to him later, he has a great voice and stage presence, but what really impressed Tim was the way Irahon interacted with his friends. He was nice to all of them and took it upon himself to get his buddies up to dance and sing and made sure they were all included and having a great time. Good news – Irahon told me that he will be at our event at Trinity Church Soup Kitchen on Christmas Eve. We might want to send him the music ahead of time.

Again, thank you from the bottom of my heart for making that five-show event happen so perfectly.

Merry Christmas!



December 14, 2009

Amy Robinson  
Holiday Express  
968 Shrewsbury Ave.  
Tinton Falls, NJ 07724

Dear Amy, Sharon and All Members of the Holiday Express,

I can't begin to tell you how much we enjoyed your visit to our school on December 10th. Your music, joy and spirit transcended every nook and cranny of our school family. You epitomize the best that may be found in people who celebrate life and, in doing so, spread good will and joy to all you touch.

Have a wonderful Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Sincerely

Ralph Lotierzo  
Principal



# Tim McLoone's Notes From the Road



*Notes From the Road, written by Tim McLoone, 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.*

That was followed by Mary D'Arcy's always impressive rendition of "Oh Holy Night" that moved one resident to tenderly kiss Mary's hand as she sang. Talk about your Holiday Express 'moments!' The raffles were really appreciated at both events and soon it was time to go from Ancora, but we just couldn't stop, adding "Love Train," which got almost the whole room on the floor – even those confined to chairs. Then it was "All Alone At Christmas" and it was

## ...And so it begins.

Season #17 was suddenly upon us as we delivered event #628 at Woodbine Developmental and #629 at Ancora. And what appropriate places they were to start out, both a stark reminder of why we do this.

### Woodbine Developmental Center

On Monday, a gloomy day, we saw the men of Woodbine. Because of the early 10 am bus, we had a small band of volunteers, some of them first-time Holiday Express 'newbies.' On the long ride to Woodbine, located somewhere deep in the Pine Barrens, there really was no way to explain to them what they were about to experience.

It's always amazing to me to see familiar faces at these events but there they were. Even though it was men only, dancing was the rule of the day and the audience was quick to get into the spirit of the party as the band opened with Val leading the way on "We Need A Little Christmas." It was a small band with Jerry 'The Legend' acting as the entire horn section, but it actually sounded pretty good (every once in awhile) and we all agreed it was surprising how fast the time went. And, you know what? There is still something special about belting out "All Alone At Christmas" for the first time. It still gets you.

### Ancora Psychiatric Hospital

There is no public facility in NJ, except perhaps the Statehouse, that has been more pilloried in the media over the past year than Ancora. I am sure the abuses and other problems that were uncovered were real, but what we encountered bore no resemblance to any of that. We had a slightly larger band, albeit without a horn section, but a few new band members were in attendance for their Holiday Express debut.

It was a slow start as most of the 300 or so residents were busy eating their tasty Jersey Mike's subs (*please shop there*), but once they got going, the party took off like a rocket. I think the main reason was the staff who, we were told, volunteered to be there. They got involved with everything we did right from the get-go and it rubbed off on the clients. Probably one of the best versions ever of "Candles Burning Low" with a dozen or so of the staff belting out the last verse. "12 Days" was hysterical, particularly with Louis, the wandering 'French Hen,' but the best was yet to come. BethAnne's son, Paul, debuted his soon to be hit single, "I Love Santa Claus," while sitting on the piano as his Mom backed him up. Wait 'til you hear this...and Paul wrote it! And he's not even 7 yet!!!

done. A wonderful start to the season. Two down and only 48 to go!

### Trenton Area Soup Kitchen; Trenton Psychiatric Hospital

Today was our annual Trenton Trip with stops at Trenton Area Soup Kitchen and then Trenton Psychiatric Hospital. We were reflecting on the fact that we have taken this trip in a wild snowstorm, windy rains and hail, but yesterday was kind of mild and nice out. It's nonetheless always a jolt when we drive up to the Soup Kitchen and see several of their clients sleeping on the cold ground outside.

By all accounts, yesterday was our 14th year at TASK. In some ways it has changed: new directors and, of course, we lost our good friend Tyrone a few years back. But in most ways it is the same. Desperately impoverished people, aged well beyond their years, and most of them with a certain 'street' look, whether from being out in the elements, or the more visible scars on their faces.

We never got a final count but it looked like between 400-500 came through and had a meal while we played away. The original estimate was thought to be closer to 800 since we had served 700+ the year before but, we were told, the turnout was lighter yesterday because they were wherever they live waiting for government checks.

The clients there are always surprisingly receptive to us and the highlight had to be Desiree singing "White Christmas" with the band and then some other songs later. A great voice. And then there was young Michael, as pleasant as you could want, 23 years old and there with his Mom. When I asked what plans he had, he seemed, at first, perplexed that someone would ask him that and then embarrassed that he really didn't have an answer. Heartbreaking. And so it goes at the Trenton Soup Kitchen.

Trenton Psychiatric was crazy and fun as always. The staff there really makes an effort with their patients. I could not believe how many staff members were dancing with, or hugging their clients, many of whom are obviously difficult to handle. We never cease to be amazed that these social workers come back there everyday to do their life's calling. It is truly humbling.

We saw a lot of the same faces we have seen there for many years now. The big aspiration for most of them is to be released into a group home of some sort but, in many cases, the waiting lists are long. In so many of the cases, however, you can readily see how they would have difficulty surviving in an unsupervised environment.

We were getting a lot of group participation, singing and dancing for awhile but then, after about an hour or so, all the energy just drained out of the room. We don't know if it was related to medications or what, but quickly everyone started drifting away. It happens like this every year.

But we'll be back.

Well, just when I thought we had experienced everything possible at a Holiday Express event, two really compelling ones took place. They were our 18th and 19th of this year and 645th and 646th overall (are you listening Toys"R"Us?) so you would think there would have developed a certain predictability by now.

### The Lyons House – Center of Recovery and Hope Department of veterans Affairs

Now, we had been here at the urging of Maureen Staub (ok, she TOLD us we were going) a couple of times a few years back but we were early in the 'season' back then and the vets in attendance were only geriatrics and they didn't like us very much... ok, they hated us. So, this location was dropped from the schedule. It was, obviously, put back on this year and we played to a pretty large audience that really covered all demographics with a number of children, a disabled group, and, of course, many vets from all of this country's unfortunate wars of the past 60+ years.

The party was a little slow to develop but some dancing broke out early anyway and that seemed to break the ice. A brief ceremony was then held with a lot of 'thank you's' being given but it was a prayer offered by one of the older vets that really touched everyone:

"Holy Father in heaven, we come to you today to praise you and to glorify you. But most of all, we want to thank you for making the Veteran's Program what it is today. We ask that you bless this celebration and everyone here – veterans, non-veterans, and especially the volunteers from Holiday Express. We ask that you bless their families and keep them safe. We ask that you guide us and lead us as we travel down the road to recovery. Make our quest for recovery an easy one. Be there when we get weak and when our minds are troubled. Be there when we lose confidence in ourselves. Give us the strength that we need to survive and prosper. Give us your love and peace in our hearts."

I've made a pretty big point over the years of telling people Holiday Express is not a religious organization, but we certainly are a spiritual one and that simply eloquent prayer moved everyone.

After that we dove in with "God Bless America" and there was no turning back. We discovered a vet singer, John Cantey, through "Candles Burning Low" and he regaled us (yes, he did) with a very Nat King Cole-esque version of "Chestnuts Roasting...aka "The Christmas Song" that was so very touching. The 'Disco Santas' were a howl and we had a rousing version of the "Twelve Days" as well, with a previously reluctant crowd participating to a man and woman. There was even a Bandiera look-alike sighting! (further proof that war is,

indeed, hell). Melissa finished it off with what has become a very moving version of "True Colors" and it was time to go home.

The vets and their staff seemed genuinely touched by the whole experience with many of them taking the time to speak with all of us. A great day. Thanks, Maureen (and Amy R). It just took us a few years to figure it out.

### A. Harry Moore

Monday morning shows are not necessarily where everyone wants to be, but we never have a problem filling a bus to go here. This is a school in Jersey City for severely disabled children who, in many cases, are also from impoverished families. The staff is warm and loving but the problems they and these children face everyday are more than apparent. Almost everyone is in a chair of some sort and many can neither speak nor hear. The mortality of their students is also a tragic reality the teachers and staff of this school have to face. I don't know the exact age of the students but they appear to be from 4 or 5 up to 18 or 19 when they must graduate. I may be wrong about those ages.

The building is an old brick structure that conjures up images of *Ralphie* from "A Christmas Story." We play in a smallish auditorium that has no fixed chairs for obvious reasons. The walls are covered with hand lettered signs welcoming us that we bring back to display in the Holiday Express warehouse.

The 'program' began with an introduction by one of the students that he wrote. He could barely get any sound out at all but the audience roared upon the conclusion of his intro. Val walked into the crowd to start with "Happy Holidays" but when it transitioned to "Nobody Ought To Be..." the room exploded with noise and excitement. The Kathryn Barnett Holiday Express dancers, elves and characters all entered and it was sheer, beautiful chaos. After that, there were so very many touching moments...the deaf boy who put his head, face first, into the bell of Rick's sax while *Rick played*; the outrageous woman with the 'Nine Ladies Dancing,' "True Colors" (again) and all the rest. The 90 minutes flew by and it was a shame to leave. But they had saved the best for last. The 'thank you' was given to us by another student who couldn't herself speak but typed her message into a device that can then produce the words as she 'said' thank you to us. It was just too much.

Like I said, 646 events and counting, and this may have been the best of them all. We were blessed to be there.

### Matheny Medical and Education Center

This is another one of the events that Maureen Staub 'told us to do' but, as always with Maureen, she was right on the money with this one. Of course, we have gone to Matheny for over a decade now and it never ceases to amaze. During that time, however, we lost the dear, departed Robin who meant so much to all of us – but onward we march.

Well, this Sunday was a little different as 'black ice' covered the roadways of 287, 206 and 202, making access to Matheny treacherous to say the least. I had opted to drive there with bassist Mark Murphy who took the position that, if the roads are dangerous, then let's drive faster so we spend less time on the roads! A little scary, but we did get there.

Unfortunately, the bus was not as lucky so we launched the show minus the costumes and bus-bound musicians and helpers, but with a strong North Jersey contingent of male singers. As we started, we never realized how much we depended on costumed characters and women to lead "Candles Burning Low" but we fought on.

I finally introduced "Higher and Higher" since we had three horns to provide some musical firepower and, just as we were wailing away, Ron and then Donna appeared on the stage. The bus had at last arrived! I extended "Higher and Higher" in anticipation of a zillion female singers swarming the stage leading to a boisterous finale. As Joe Petillo entered (another male singer!) as the only singer on the bus, I knew that doom was descending on us – quickly! Ah, nothing like hearing a bunch of guys singing in 'girl keys' to lift your heart at the holiday season. I'm pretty sure the audience didn't care but it was all a little scary – musically anyway.

It's a great group at Matheny and a wonderful place to be. It's always good to be with Ara, Camille, Missy and the rest of the gang – but we will always miss Robin.

### Eva's Village (See story on Page 17)

This was event #35 of the season (and #662 overall) and when do we stop saying, "this was the best one ever?" We made a significant change this year after Sister Gloria told us that all of the adults were unable to fit into the dinner because of the increased number of children in the room. So, in typical Holiday Express fashion, we held an earlier 'Children and Moms' party at 4:30 and that was a lot of fun.

The adults arrived at 6:00 and were treated to a terrific meal by the McLoone's Pier House staff which definitely put everyone in a good mood. There is really no explaining what transpired after that: all-out participation by the 300+ in the room, so many of whom are in active addiction recovery. Eva's is a remarkable place, truly a 'village.' They have about 40 resident men trying to overcome their addictions and an equal number of women with children, plus the adjacent residential housing they are developing to provide transitional homes for their clients. They provide a broad array of social services to help these good people successfully work their way into society.

For many years now, trumpeter Tony Perruso and his co-workers from Wells Fargo Advisors have championed Eva's as the Giving Partner. This past season, Lori George, whose husband also works for Wells Fargo, got her own employer involved! Tracy Early, partner in Untracht Early, not only gave employees the go-ahead to be an additional Giving Partner for Eva's, but also made a matching donation to Holiday Express!

You really have to root for a group like Eva's. Nothing is coming easily for them right now (ever?), but it didn't stop anyone from yelling out 'Six Geese A Laying!' We could be with them everyday.

### The Children's Center of Monmouth County

This was one of the physically most demanding of all we've ever done but, given the disabilities displayed right in front of us, it's a little difficult to complain about being tired. We started at the Children's Center a few years back at the suggestion of Board member, Paul Huegel, whose son, Cal, is

a student there, and we did a couple of 45 minute mini-shows as different classes were brought in. Last year we found out that we were still not seeing all of the students so we offered to do as many of those 'mini-shows' as necessary to see everyone. Well, that turned out to be five opportunities to visit "Candles Burning Low..."

Each group had 90+ students plus very large number of healthcare professionals, social workers, etc., many of whom were one-on-one with the students, the vast majority of whom had severe autism. Once we got them revved up, the party began to look like a track meet with care givers chasing students around the room and dancing breaking out everywhere.

The last group of older children (teens) included a terrific young man named Irahon who was clearly a leader among his peers and went to great trouble to make sure his 'posse' all got to sing into the mic. Then he graced us with a song by himself. His voice was strong and pure, belying his disabilities, as the crowd roared. Suddenly, we weren't so tired after all.

### St. John's Soup Kitchen Trinity Church Soup Kitchen

Season #17 came to an end in two locations: St. John's Soup Kitchen in Newark and Trinity Church Soup Kitchen in Asbury Park. It always saddens us that we have to split the group to service both locations since I think we would all like to be together on the last day.

Last year saw drenching Christmas Eve rains, so much better weather was a welcome respite this time around, as we served just under 700 in Newark. The Rum Runner kitchen staff started their day very early to prepare all of the food for folks who view this as their Christmas dinner. And it's always amazing to see the organization that goes into fitting out the tent and keeping the food line replenished, helping our guests get seated and served, and then busing the tables. Others were working to clean, organize and restock the pantry while another group worked the gift bag line. It was all so impressive.

And to think that the same thing was happening down in Asbury at the same time, with another 400 folks served. McLoone's in Asbury provided the food there, while Jim Celestino led the (very large) band. It's amazing that we almost take this additional Christmas Eve event for granted now.

It's over now which always feels strange. There is the relief that you don't have to be somewhere tomorrow morning (and then again in the afternoon), but there is also a strange emptiness as well. As I write this, I am listening to a forecast predicting that temperatures will only be in the 20s tomorrow with wind chills well below zero. It has to make you wonder how the many people we have just visited will be able to survive. And, as we find out each year, some of them won't.

Thanks to all for your insanely fabulous efforts.



# Holiday Express Financial Information

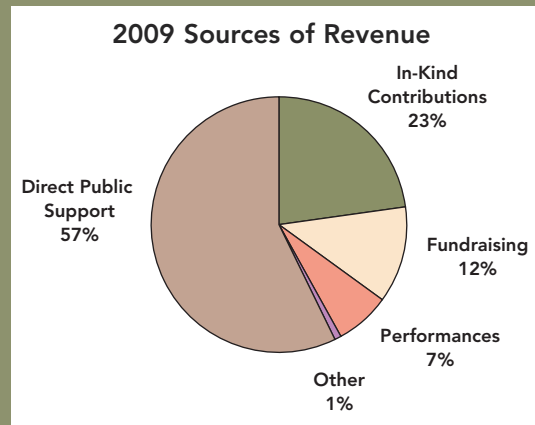
The Success Of Our Mission – to deliver music, food, gifts, financial support and friendship to those with the greatest need for the gift of human kindness during the holiday season and throughout the year – can be found in our numbers:

- 17 years that Holiday Express has been delivering human kindness
- 676 events in 7 states since 1993
- 1,500 volunteers annually
- 200,000+ gift bags given to those in need – and counting

We place a high priority on being faithful stewards of our revenue.

Fiscal Year April 30	2009	2008
Total Revenue	977,847*	1,559,099*
Total Expenses	1,133,337	1,527,312
*Includes non cash		

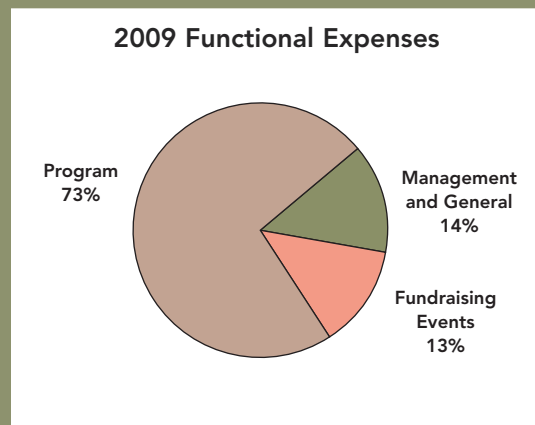
Every organization that qualifies for tax exempt status under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code is further classified as a public charity or a private foundation. The primary distinction is the source of financial support. Holiday Express is a public charity and as a public charity can receive support under 3 categories; (1) Dues, Fees, Charges – (2) Government – (3) Charitable contributions. We receive no revenue from categories (1) and (2) and rely entirely on (3) Charitable contributions.



As the pie chart indicates, 80% of our revenue comes from direct public support (financial donations) and in-kind contributions (products & services). Our fiscal year ends April 30; the above numbers do not reflect this past season, which unfortunately continues the downward trend.

We hope that you will consider how much every single contribution helps us do what we do. The places we visit and the people we see – the neediest – rely on us.

It is through the generosity of individuals, businesses and foundations that we are able to continue our mission. Can we ask you to stretch just a bit more for the people who are truly stretched to their limits?



Secure online donations can be made through our website, [www.holidayexpress.org](http://www.holidayexpress.org) or by using the enclosed envelope.

## Season 2009 By The Numbers

51 Events – 5 New Locations  
(2 Cancelled due to Weather)  
3 Days Had 3 Events Per Day  
18 Days Had 2 Events Per Day  
6 Days Were Singles

6 Public Performances  
Red Bank Town Lighting, NJPAC,  
Big Joe Henry Extravaganza,  
Ranney School and Count Basie (2)

Number of Locations by Type  
9 – Adult Special Needs Programs  
9 – Schools for Kids with Special Needs  
6 – Developmental Centers  
3 – Psychiatric Hospitals  
3 – Soup Kitchens  
4 – Cerebral Palsy Sites  
5 – Medical and Educational Facilities for the Disabled  
2 – Children’s Hospitals  
2 – Shelters  
1 – Family Health Clinic  
1 – Program for Critically Ill Children and their Families

Events  
• Average more than 25 people per event including musicians  
• 4 hours per event, including travel  
• 5,000 total event volunteer hours  
• 8,700 total volunteer hours  
• More than 4,500 bus and truck miles logged  
• 27 days of events

Gifts Distributed  
14,896 gift bags  
5,935 men  
3,336 women  
2,010 kids  
3,615 unisex  
Total Value: \$420,567

Raffles  
• Gave out over 900 items in 200 prizes for 26 events  
• Prizes valued over \$6000  
• Prizes included: 3 bikes, DVD players, boom boxes, watches, iPod, personal CD players, electric guitars and amps, guitars, drum set, sports equipment, sports jerseys and hats, jewelry, pocketbooks, complete makeup kits, spa kits, winter coats, fleeces, sweaters, sweat and lounging outfits, pjs, toys and art supplies, books, CDs & DVDs, bedding sets

Warehouse Volunteers – Gary Schwartz, Debbie Robinson, Ann Robinson, Mary Robinson, Phyllis Peterson, Sharon Kitley, Jack Readie



## Why I Am a Holiday Express Volunteer By Barbara Willis

What drives people to help strangers who need a hand? And what determines which charitable organizations we support? For me, choosing Holiday Express was easy. When I look into the eyes of the clients, I see myself.

I grew up in a federal housing project, in a household where even the bare necessities were hard to come by. We had no car, no savings account, no frills. Like most little girls, I yearned to go to dancing school. My dad took a second job to make my dream possible, but soon lost both jobs following a series of hospitalizations for his heart. The dancing school teacher, knowing our situation, kept me on for free.

When my dad’s condition worsened and there were no more medical options, the doctors felt it was best if he rested at home. It wasn’t long after that when, at the age of five, I returned one day from dancing school and found him dead on the bathroom floor. My recital was two weeks away. Despite friends telling my mom it would be disrespectful to have me participate so soon after my dad’s passing, she forged ahead. She told me to dance for my father, since he would be watching me perform from heaven.

It was my mother’s relentless spirit that got us through the tough times. Just months before my dad’s passing, my 12-year-old sister also died unexpectedly. I don’t honestly know how my mother coped with the trauma of losing her daughter and her husband...and having no resources and a young child to raise. The only thing my mom inherited following my dad’s death was a pile of medical bills.



Over the years, my mom always had a way of making more out of less. She was incredibly resourceful, earning money as the unofficial seamstress for the dancing school and providing typing services to local businesses. She saved every penny to buy me a Barbie doll and clothed her in an amazing wardrobe of sequined gowns which she designed. To this day, I value those lovingly executed creations more than any of my other possessions.

When the time came for me to apply to college, I wasn’t sure I wanted to go. My mother’s tearful eyes said it all. She lived for me to “make good” and escape the life of poverty. As luck would have it, I got a full scholarship to Rutgers. So I made a deal with my mom to try it for one year. If I didn’t like it, she reluctantly agreed that she would not stand in the way of my exploring other pursuits. Her endless encouragement and support through my freshman year convinced me to stick with it and, ultimately, to continue my schooling for a Master’s degree.

Today I am a communications professional with a resume that includes responsible positions at Fortune 500 companies and public relations agencies. However, deep

inside, I am still that little girl from the federal housing project who knows how it feels to be among the less fortunate.

For this reason, I am a Holiday Express volunteer. Though much of my contribution has involved using my skills to create content for the Web site and write articles for the newsletters and yearbook, I treasure most the interaction with the clients.

My first experience was in 2003 at Medallion Care, a behavioral health facility for adults. I arrived by car before the bus. When I walked into the center wearing my Holiday Express shirt, several clients got so excited that they nearly smothered me with hugs. I remember visiting the Lyons Veterans Affairs facility and having one of the men ask if I knew how to jitterbug. After we finished dancing, he thanked me profusely and confessed that he hadn’t “cut a rug” in years.

Another fond memory is from a past Make-A-Wish event, where I volunteered to be a face painter. There was nothing I could paint on the sweet faces of those children to take away the hardship of their daily lives. However, for that moment in time, they felt special and their faces glowed with happiness.

The sad reality is that untold numbers of people in difficult circumstances do not have the supportive and affectionate role model that I had growing up. Holiday Express helps fill that void by letting young and old in schools, nursing homes, specialty care facilities and soup kitchens know that they matter. And here’s the pay back we never requested: their smiles tell us that we matter to them, too.

### We Love Networking!

Check out Holiday Express on both



and



### 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](http://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](mailto: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.



1 Ryan Celestino, Hollis Cooper, Valerie Dowd-Webb, Paul Plemenos, Jeanne Westendorf, Jeff MacPherson, Mary D'Arcy, Joe Petillo, Mike Mahoney, Tarika Jean-Pierre;



2 Calling Birds Hollis Cooper, Marylynn Hawkins, Debbie Adamchak, Susan Edelman, Rosemary Minear, Laura Melnick;



The Band! The Grinch, Cookie Monster, Rudolph, Frosty, Elmo



19 Bernie "The Burn" Dippolito returns as Kristian Rex watches with admiration;



20 Kathryn Barnett Holiday Express Dancers;

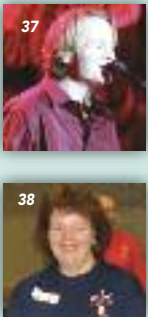
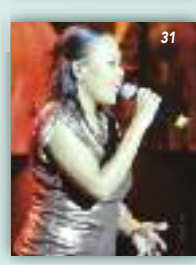
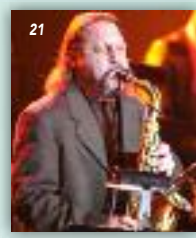


3 Dancing Queen at Trinity Church Soup Kitchen event;

# Season 2009



(19) Bernie "The Burn" Dippolito returns as Kristian Rex watches with admiration; (20) Kathryn Barnett Holiday Express Dancers; (21) Tommy LaBella; (22) Jillian Rhys; (23) Gingerbread Man/Board member Terel Cooperhouse had Tim McLoone and everyone else in the room at Eva's Village laughing out loud with this goofy costume; (24) Bob Bandiera, Mike Guadagno; (25) Steve Chrepta; (26) Ralph Notaro and Gladys Bryant; (27) Board member Amy Broza; (28) Long time volunteer Kim Guadagno, New Jersey's first Lt. Governor joins the fun at Straight & Narrow; (29) The one and only Donna Edington, Holiday Express Program Director; (30) Peg Ford, Giving Partners Coordinator; (31) Tarika Jean-Pierre; (32) Giving Partners Wells Fargo and Untracht Early parade of presents donated to Eva's Village; (33) Board of Trustees member Peter DeMarco dons Elmo; (34) Diane Kilzen and Crafts Coordinator Jeanne Cosentino; (35) Pam McCoy and Melissa Chill; (36) Valerie Dowd-Webb; (37) Carl Gentry; (38) Dottie Cooper; (39) Katie Bordiuk, Frank Calendrino, Alan Grant, Bob Polding, Amy Broza, Mike Mahoney.



# HOLIDAY EXPRESS SEASON 2009 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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December 21, 2009

**New York Mercantile Exchange**  
Charitable Foundation

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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.



Sarah Lepis



Guests at Passaic County Elks CP Adult



Phil Jacobowitz, Diane Kilzen at Passaic County Elks CP High School

## GIFT BAG ITEMS



Gift bags packed by Holiday Express are an essential part of each event!

A young boy writes, "Thank you for my gifts. I use the playing cards with my brothers and I already wore my scarf."

A principal writes, "The gifts given to the students were once again overly generous, but sincerely needed and consequential to the students who received them. The hats, gloves and scarves certainly came in useful lately with the winter days bringing such frigid temps to our area."

A woman from a treatment center, "The gift bags that were given out were truly appreciated. They were enjoyed as well as needed."

These are a few comments about the gift bags we give to everyone we visit. Warm clothing, blankets, personal care products

and stuffed animals are examples of things we put in the gift bags. More than 900 junior and adult volunteer "elves" worked diligently this season to ensure each gift bag is packed with care. We want the gift to be substantial, that's why we use more than 200,000 individual items each season.

**14,896 – Total Gift Bags**  
**5,935 Men, 3,336 Women, 2,010 Kids**  
**3,615 Unisex**  
**Total Value \$420,000**

**More than 3,700 Total Warehouse**  
**Volunteer Hours**

**54 Youth Groups, 10 Corporate Groups**  
**Hundreds of Individuals, Several Families**

To have enough inventory on hand to fill those gift bags, we rely on donations from manufacturers, distributors, stores and many other businesses that donate items in bulk quantities to help fill the warehouse shelves. Schools, churches, offices and countless other groups will hold drives and collections for the items we need.

Also, many individuals purchase items on the "gift bag needs list" and drop by the

warehouse with bags full of donations – asking for no recognition at all.

It would be impossible to recognize all the generous people who support us through collections and drives, not only for gift bag items, but financial donations as well. Here is one example of a school making a difference by collecting for our gift bags. "Every year the students at Bayshore Middle School join three million people across the nation in **Make a Difference Day**, the national day of helping others. This year, in addition to decorating and filling 250 Halloween bags for a food bank, the school collected toothbrushes. With the help of one of our parents, we were able to collect more than 3,500 toothbrushes and 2,000 tubes of toothpaste to donate to Holiday Express. The students look forward to being able to help out again next year."

We are very grateful for the generosity of so many – your contributions for the gift bags help those in need.

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Scott Margolin Scholarship Foundation  
Shore Point Distributors  
Sickles Market  
Siemens Caring Hands Foundation  
Somerset Medical Foundation  
St. Barnabas Health System  
St. John's  
Steinhauser Family  
Stillwell Hanson, Inc.  
Sysco Food Service  
Tedesco Family  
The Curchin Group, LLC  
Tiffany & Co.  
Tropical Drinks, LLC  
Trudy and Charlie Parton  
UBS  
US Foods  
Vineland Developmental Center  
Wakefern Food Corporation  
Wells Fargo Advisors  
Wenning's Wholesale Meats  
Windmill  
Wingtip, Inc. Aviation Consulting  
WPLJ 95.5  
WRAT 95.9



## Matt Scuteri



I suppose we all have a unique story about how we first came to know about Holiday Express. My first meeting

was completely accidental. Two years ago, I was a senior at Communications High School in Wall. My group and I were assigned to do a holiday-themed news report for our television production class. My group leader suggested we do the report on Holiday Express, which I had not heard of. A few days later, we pulled into the parking lot of the Children's Center of Monmouth County, and my life forever changed.

The first thing I noticed was how kind it was of Tim McLoone to stop pre-show preparations to answer our questions about where he got the idea for Holiday Express, and what the organization does – questions he's no doubt answered a million times. He seemed genuinely interested in what we were doing and glad to help.

At first we stayed in the back to capture some extra footage. Teachers always told us that, as journalists, we are never supposed to become part of the story. Our job is merely to document and report. Holiday Express played three forty-five minute sets that day – and by show one-and-a-half we were all dressed in Elf garb and dancing around like fools! We were *not* journalists that day. I walked out knowing that I had to be a part of this somehow.

In 2008, I auditioned for the band. Although I didn't make it, I was more than happy to be a general volunteer that season. After a summer of practicing my bass and listening to Holiday Express CDs, I decided to audition again for the band in 2009. When I received the e-mail saying that I was in, I couldn't have been happier. It was a dream come true, the very idea

that I – a twenty-year-old college student who's musical resume could fit on a Post-It – would be able to share a stage with some of the Jersey Shore's best musicians, and bring happiness to those who need it most.

My first year in the band was laden with memories I'll have with me for the rest of my life. Playing these gigs was much different from any other show I've done in my brief musical career. For one thing, I've never before seen such sheer joy on the faces of my audiences. I've also noticed that during a Holiday Express event, my ability as a musician comes second to my ability as a performer. If I look happy and excited, then my audience will too. And honestly, how could I not look happy and excited to be there?

I'll always remember the show at Vineland when one of the clients stood up on a chair in the middle of the show and screamed, "I LOVE YOU!" Or later that day when I got a big hug from another client when I gave her my Santa hat. Dressing as Rudolph at University Behavioral Health (something I highly recommend), and seeing everyone's face light up is another favorite memory.

In the coming years, I hope to bring more of my friends and family to Holiday Express events so that they too can have this experience. Of course, my first year would have been a disaster without the helpful guidance of Amy Broza, Jim Celestino and Gerry Gironda who answered all my questions and helped me to grow as a musician. And how can I forget the incomparable Bob Bandiera who let me play his bass on a couple of songs at Vineland.

But lastly, thank you Tim and everyone who decided to take a chance on me. You will not be disappointed. As a college student, I don't know what the future holds in store for me. Whatever happens, I hope to always have a place in Holiday Express.

## Joe Petillo



In the spring of 1995, at the suggestion of Ann Robinson, Tim McLoone stopped by a local restaur-

ant where I was performing. Tim explained this vision he had about musicians "bringing a little Christmas" to those less fortunate, and asked me if I'd be interested in joining the band next Christmas. The more he described what they did the more his enthusiasm grew, and without hesitation I said "yes." That following September Tim called to invite me to rehearsal, which would lead to 15 years of some of the greatest experiences in my life.

I've been extremely blessed in my life, the greatest being my two wonderful daughters, Bryn and Carissa. After my first season with Holiday Express I knew the meaning of Christmas would never be the same for me, and I've tried to teach that to my children. For these past 15 years so much of what I've taken away from the places and faces I have encountered has weaved its way into every facet of my life. It's so hard to measure your own life with the same ruler, after seeing up close how others spend their days. It truly puts your own life in perspective. I try to encourage those around me to become active in the organization, and while some do, the truth is it's not for everyone. You need to be ready for this! But if you are, it will be the greatest investment of your life.

I've particularly enjoyed watching the organization grow to have a year-round impact on the community. Serving on numerous committees, I'm most proud of the scholarship program. This is something I have been quite passionate about as it targets the youth in need and gives them the fighting chance they may have been denied. It teaches them that someone can actually care about their well being without asking for anything in return.

*Continued on page 18*

## Mary McCrink



In 1994, I learned of Holiday Express through some original members, and have been participating

ever since. Being part of such a loving group has helped me grow as a person and open up. I began to see the connection everyone shares, how alike we all are regardless of our circumstance, and how the smallest act of kindness can deeply impact someone's life.

At one of my first events, I felt moved to sing "O Holy Night." To me, this song captures the essence and touches the heart of Christmas. Little did I know that for years to come, I would be singing the same song for so many people in need of a spiritual lift or a glimmer of hope. I am very thankful for this opportunity, which is quite humbling. To be able to give from my heart is truly a blessing.

For too long Christmas had been a struggle for me, until one year I poured out my heart in a song called "I'm Not Ready for Christmas." Writing it was a great release. I thought, "Wow...I bet lots of folks can relate to these holiday feelings." Soon I was dressing up as a rag doll and performing it with Holiday Express! It turned the whole struggle around for me. There is great power in creative expression!

*The McCrink Sisters: Maureen, Mary, Patty*



I have six creative and soulful siblings. My loving mother, Frances, shared her beautiful voice with us as children. My calling was clear. My sister, Maureen, a brilliant songstress and songwriter, is also a part of Holiday Express. The youngest, Patty, who has a lovely voice, also participated one year. The three of us did a rendition of "Little Town of Bethlehem." That moment ended much too soon for me. There's nothing in the world like singing with my amazing sisters. The experience inspired us to write and record a Christmas album, which is still in production.

I have always supported myself through singing, in a multitude of ways. I thrive outdoors, where I find much of my inspiration. I wrote a fantasy children's story with songs based on my experience as a field guide at Sandy Hook, where I taught children from all over New Jersey about the history and wildlife. My hope is to get it published and animated.

A memorable moment for me was this past Christmas Eve at the Trinity Church Soup Kitchen event. While singing "O Holy Night," I found myself looking into the shining eyes of an infant. Our eyes were locked for like a minute. I can't forget the joy in those eyes. On some level, the child understood. I felt like I was looking into the eyes of Jesus.

I am in admiration and awe of all the musicians and volunteers with such huge hearts, whose generosity of spirit is boundless. Sincere thanks to everyone who's helped make my time with Holiday Express a wonderful experience.



## Eva's Village Tells U.N. About its Mission

In preparation for a United Nations meeting in February, 2010, 190 non-governmental organizations from 62 countries submitted reports describing how they help their clients.

Just three groups were invited to present their stories – and the only American organization included was Eva's Village

"We're successful because we have a board that's actively involved, because we are very strict about sticking to our mission and because we have an amazing staff," Sister Gloria Perez, Eva's Executive Director, told the session.

Created in 1982 to provide meals to about 30 homeless people in the basement of an old convent, Eva's Village has since grown to a multi-tiered human-services agency with an annual \$8 million operating budget.

It feeds about 1,000 people daily, runs a series of homeless shelters, provides addiction rehab programs, operates transitional housing for clients making their way out of homelessness and runs a free health clinic. It's also building affordable-housing units that will serve both the disabled and the working poor.

"Once we started the food kitchen, we thought, what good is feeding people if they're living in the streets? So we opened shelters," she explained. "Then we realized many of the men and women we served were addicted, so we opened a treatment program. Then we realized their health was in a terrible state, so we opened one of only five free clinics in New Jersey."

The panel was held as part of the annual meeting of the U.N.'s Commission for Social Development. The session was designed to demonstrate ways that non-governmental organizations can help bring basic human rights to all people.

*(Originally reported by Record Columnist, Harvey Lipman)*

*Pictured above: Sister Gloria Perez joins in the fun as Rick Brunermer, Mike Guadagno, Tim McLoone and the Holiday Express band entertain the moms and children at Eva's Village.*

## Nancy & Peter Reinhart



Our experiences with Holiday Express have grown in the past few years, first as a donor and lover of the Count Basie benefit concerts, and now as volunteers.

A few years ago at the Sickles Wine & Cheese Classic benefit, the live auction included "singing with the band." I was standing next to Tim during the bidding, and he nudged me and said something like "you are an awesome singer – you should be up on the stage," or more likely "the bid is not high enough, do something." Thus began the Peter, Charlie and Rusty "trio" at the Basie.

But what really was transformative for us was when we volunteered at our first Holiday Express client event, which was the

Staten Island Special Olympics for people with developmental disabilities. Nancy has a younger sister with Down Syndrome so this event was particularly meaningful to her. It is one thing to be in the company of one developmentally challenged person, yet another to be with hundreds and their incredible care givers – truly one of those "count your blessings" moments.

Our next experience was the Lakeview School in Edison. Virtually all of the children have neurological disorders and are in wheelchairs. A little touch on the arm or a smile in their face evokes a response. Here, Nancy bonded with one of the young wheelchair bound girls. I even got to be Cookie Monster!

Our final event that year was on Christmas Eve at the Trinity Church Soup Kitchen in Asbury Park. We couldn't stop talking about Christmas Eve and how this was one of the best Christmases ever.

## Ann Robinson



I've been a volunteer with Holiday Express since the second year of its existence.

Since Tim McLoone is my brother-in-law, did I have any other choice? I've always loved volunteering with Holiday Express. In the beginning we were all flying by the seat of our pants – everyone did a little of everything; we weren't nearly as organized as we are these days. Of course Holiday Express didn't reach the amount of people we do now. The need was there – we just had to find them or they had to find us.

Over the years I've been Rudolph at the events and on stage at Count Basie, a Disco Santa a time or two, and in the early days was once called upon to "sing" at an event when there were no singers available (scary for both me and the audience). I've been an event manager, was in charge of crafts and face painting for a number of years (thank you, Jeanne Cosentino, for taking

that huge task from me!), put together raffle gifts for several seasons, and am currently "in charge" of the morning warehouse along with my sidekick, Gail Chimento.

Spending most of the Holiday Express season in the warehouse is quite a change for me. However, being there instead of at the actual events has had just as many rewards. Putting together the approximately 15,000 gift bags that are given out during the season is a huge undertaking. I've worked with wonderful volunteers who spend countless hours doing all the work needed, and it's not just packing gift bags.

Warehouse volunteers begin working in mid-October. Before the packing begins, the inventory coming in has to be counted and organized. Product donations come in all season long and have to be accounted for and hopefully are put somewhere in that large space where they can be easily found. We pre-pack the toiletry kits that just about everyone receives in their gift bags. At the end of the season there's the mountainous task of cleaning up, reorganizing and counting what's left. We

In 2009, Nancy and I did the same Lakeview School event and Nancy reconnected with her "friend" from the first year. I really wanted to volunteer at the New Lisbon School event since Tim has said how tough a place it is. Well, Tim was right. New Lisbon epitomizes the need for Holiday Express.

We did another new event for us this year, the Alpha School in Jackson. Just as the show was about to start, a shy young girl approached Tim and said she wanted to sing "Silent Night." Well, the voice that came from this little girl was a "Susan Boyle" moment. I looked at everyone in the band and all our jaws had dropped. Definitely a Holiday Express moment!

We have so enjoyed the new friendships we have made by volunteering with Holiday Express and sharing the joy of "bringing the gift of human kindness."

need as many volunteers in the warehouse after the season as we do preparing for it – please feel free to stop by any morning in January and February.

Several people have suggested that every Holiday Express volunteer should spend at least an hour or two working in the warehouse. It gives you great perspective as to the enormity of the task Holiday Express undertakes every year. The warehouse is where it all begins and where it all ends – give it a try, you may get hooked!

## Joe Petillo Continued from page 16

Over these 15 years it would be impossible to pick "one special memory." Is it the angelic voice of an elderly patient who sang "O Holy Night" with us? Is it the man who re-invested in living because he was drawn from despair to the music in another room? Is it the faces of the families at Columbine that we could never forget? Is it the premature baby whose first response to external stimuli was because we sang to her? You tell me! And if you need more...I've got all night.

## Giving Partner Program Big Hearts in Little People!



wanted to jump right in and make a difference! Then when Dianne was asked to write a story about being a Giving Partner, granddaughter Eli asked to tell her story...

### By Eli Rallo, age 11

We originally heard about Holiday Express through our grandmother, Dianne Meserlin. We also heard about Holiday Express through organizations at church and school that donate items to them. At first we got involved by making holiday bags at school or helping our school's student council raise money. We donated things like toothbrushes and old clothing for children and adults in need, as well as toys and candy during Halloween and Christmas so children can have simple joys like we do. But then our grandmother began telling us all about her Holiday Express gatherings last year. This was the start of how we really got involved.

My brothers (Jack and Jake Rallo, age 9), my neighbor (Katie Donald age 12), and myself (Eli, age 11), had a lemonade stand to raise money. We worked endless hours every weekend. We chose to use our profits to be a Holiday Express Giving Partner. We wanted to give our money from the lemonade stand to a children's organization so we could relate to the cause we were supporting. When my grandmother contacted Holiday Express, they mentioned a school for boys, Somerset Hills Residential Treatment Center. The school had submitted a wish list and we realized it was the perfect opportunity and the perfect place to put our money. We thought how happy all of the children would be when they saw their new gift.

At the event, all of the children ran up to us to receive their gift, a Foosball Table. It made our hearts tickle and smiles grew on our faces. It made us feel really good, and also fortunate. The taste in our mouths was almost bittersweet. Although we could have used the money to buy a new game for ourselves, it definitely felt better to be giving to the children.

Our most memorable Holiday Express moment was when my mom, my brothers and I had a conversation with one of the boys about our family. He asked my mother if she had a mother, she said yes. He asked if she had a father, she said yes. He asked about her children and her husband. The look on his face every time my mom answered yes made tears come to my eyes. After we asked if he thought he would ever get married and he said yes. That one moment, that one conversation, made me realize how fortunate we are to have a mother and a father, to have a brother and a sister, and to have a grandmother and a grandfather.

Being a Giving Partner definitely makes you see how lucky you are in life. It also makes you realize that it is very fortunate to be where you are and to have the family you have. It makes you want to be kind to everyone in your path, and it lightens up your whole person from doing one good deed that makes so many people happy.

I informed my best friend about my good deed and she got involved with Holiday Express work at her church. I also informed my school that we should donate to Holiday Express more, which we now do.

My brothers and I would like to attend more events in the future. Maybe someday we could play and sing in the band.

One of the ways Holiday Express expands its network is by volunteers enrolling their own family members! Dianne and Bob Meserlin's grandchildren were way too young – or not even born yet – to comprehend the Holiday Express mission nine years ago when the couple began to volunteer.

Now active and socially conscious adolescents, when Dianne told Eli, Jack and Jake stories of her many Holiday Express experiences and how so many people count on us, these kind grandchildren

## Your Gift in Action

Through the generous support of the donors who participate in the Giving Partner Program, Holiday Express fills specific needs of the various charitable organizations we visit. Each location on our event schedule provides Holiday Express with a "wish list," and we seek to match companies or individuals interested in purchasing these desired items. This match of donors with charities forges a warm and personal relationship that transforms the donors and charities into true partners in caring. Many of the donations made through the Giving Partner Program come from individuals, families, neighborhood groups and corporations.

For information on how to become a Giving Partner donor, please contact us.

## GIVING PARTNERS 2009

**Number of organizations with Wish Lists: 39**

**Number of organizations with Giving Partners: 39**

**Number of Giving Partners participating: 28**  
**New Giving Partners: 5**

### Gifts Given

Airbrush System  
Gift Certificates Valued at \$3,500  
9 Wii Game Systems  
2 Karaoke Machines  
1 Computer  
4 Flip Camcorders  
DJ Bubble Blast  
Industrial Food Processor  
HDTV  
Kiln Shelf Cart  
BBQ Gas Grill  
Foosball Table  
Personal CD Players  
Tic Tac Toe Beanie Putt  
Electric Guitar Package  
iTouch iPod  
Printers  
Dishes  
Flatware  
DVD players  
Coffee Pots  
Arts/Craft Supplies  
Ping Pong Table  
Video Camera  
Privacy Screen  
2 LCD TVs  
Recovery DVDs  
Speakers and DJ Equipment

By Donna Edington

It was November 1999 when band members Jim Celestino, Scott Payden, Phil Rizzo and Roger Gardella, dressed up as Santa Claus, and wowed the annual Dinner Dance audience.

## What the Heck is a Disco Santa?!

Thanks to choreographer Kathryn Barnett, and lyricists Tim McLoone and Rick Brunermer, the soon to be chart-topping Holiday Express "Santa Claus/N-O-E-L" parody of the Village People's "Macho Man/YMCA" makes its debut. **Result: Instant hit!**



Fast forward ten years to 2009, our seventeenth season – and The Disco Santas are still going strong! Disco Santas now appear at most of our events – public and private. Celebrities, administrators, caretakers and guests clammer to be up in front strutting their Disco best – a hilarious five minutes of fame! Disney's Element, the acappella group Straight, No Chaser, Kathryn Barnett Dancer and giant leaper Casey Stolowski, as well as Elmo, Rudolph, Frosty and the Grinch have performed as Disco Santas.

However, some of the most memorable performances have been danced by the clients and staff members from the venues Holiday Express visits during our 50 plus event season.

- Each year at Medallion Care in Clifton, NJ, a day program for differently-abled people, past performers plead to be encore Santas.
- At the Passaic County Elks High School and Millburn Regional Day School, the staff performs side-by-side with the physically challenged students. At Millburn Regional some of the children are deaf. An interpreter signs the dance directions.
- At Somerset Hills Residential Treatment Center we never have enough costumes for all the boys who want to participate. Here the individual dance move section has a very modern take with the boys moon-dancing, robotting and spinning like tops on their backs.



Clockwise from top left: Casey Stolowski jumps at Count Basie 2006; Peter Reinhart and Steve Littleton at Jersey Shore Family Health Center event 2009; Passaic County Elks CP High School 2009, Eva's Village 2006; Count Basie Christmas Spectacular 2002; Red Bank Town Lighting and Holiday Express Concert 2005; Straight & Narrow 2009.

- Another memorable rendition of the Disco Santas was by five young guys from the Straight and Narrow substance abuse program in Paterson. When the song began, they rocketed through the door like race horses out of the gate. The simple moves they had just practiced were quickly jettisoned and replaced with leaps, jumps and backflips to the cheers of the wildly appreciative audience of their peers.

But the most special performances are by those most reticent when selected – staff members who are chosen by their superiors (perhaps because they themselves had been chosen in previous years), or because of the enthusiasm they exhibit interacting with the band. Sometimes they claim they are too shy to perform. Occasionally a perspective Santa actually runs and hides!

Once convinced, the newbies are dressed in official Holiday Express Disco Santa costumes and taught the choreographed moves for the song.

Then their moment arrives! Fears dissolve as they assume the beloved role, dance their individual dances, and then soak in the accolades of adoring fans, friends, co-workers and, of course, the Holiday Express volunteers and band.

And when the performance is over, after their heart rates slow and they've had some water, they will say, "Yeah, you were right. That was fun!"



# 2009 Event Highlights

April 27



**Norman A. Blesman Regional Day School**, a school that serves severely, multiply-disabled students held a Roll-A-Thon to raise money for Holiday Express and Special Olympics. Students were treated to a lap or two around the parking lot on some fancy bikes, tried their skills at the basketball hoops; and even planted marigolds and tomato plants in recognition of Earth Day. All this took place under beautiful sunny skies with rock 'n roll music adding to the festive mood of the day. Pictured is student David, filling a pot with fresh soil and plants as Donald Pignataro, Executive Director, accepts the spring blooms for his office. Thank you to Angela Cupo, Principal, and Jenifer Spear, Vice Principal, and all their staff for a terrific day – and to all those who contributed to the very generous donation of \$1,000 we received from our friends at Norman A. Blesman.

June 9



**Jefferson Awards for Public Service** – Tim McLoone was a recipient of the 2009 New Jersey State Governor's Jefferson Awards at an awards ceremony held June 9 at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, Newark, NJ. The award was given to Tim in honor of his dedication, creativity and leadership for creating Holiday Express in 1993. The Jefferson Awards were founded in 1972 by Sam Beard, Jacqueline Kennedy and Senator Robert Taft to honor people who do outstanding community service. The awards are presented on both the national and local levels. The recipients of the New Jersey State Jefferson Awards are ordinary people who, through public service and volunteerism efforts, do extraordinary things without expectation of recognition or reward.

June 12



**NJ National Guard Welcome Home Event** – In July 2008, the NJ National Guard had its largest deployment of soldiers since World War II. More than 2,850 soldiers were sent to Iraq for just under one year.

Holiday Express was invited by Adjutant General Glenn Rieth to perform for the returning troops and their families at the Sovereign Bank Arena in Trenton. Big Joe Henry of NJ101.5 served as the master of ceremonies and welcomed home all 2,850 troops.

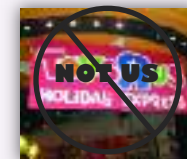
June 28

**Scholarship Brunch** – Past and present Holiday Express Scholarship recipients and their families were invited to a brunch reception at McLoone's Rum Runner on Sunday, June 28. Three new scholarships were awarded; The Lauren Townsend Scholarship went to a graduate of the Collier High School, Joshua Oliveras. Joshua is attending Raritan Valley Community College. The Little Steven Creative Arts Scholarship went to another Collier High School student, Rosina Ellington. Rosina is attending Kean University. The Andrew Spencer Scholarship went to a graduate from the Academy Charter High School, Ryan Ugrovics. Ryan is attending Monmouth University. Year-to-date the Holiday Express Scholarship program has awarded nearly \$375,000.

August 29

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace and friends hosted the "Spirit of the Shore," a seaside celebration honoring Tim McLoone, the Jersey Shore's favorite son, at the magnificent Stella Maris Retreat Center in Elberon, NJ. The tented event featured breathtaking views from the seaside cliff overlooking the Atlantic Ocean with entertainment provide by Holiday Express volunteer musician BethAnne Clayton and the Power of 5.

November 10



**Toys"R"Us Press Conference** – Tim McLoone held a press at the Holiday Express warehouse to let the media and public know that Holiday Express the charity is in no way affiliated with the retail toy giant Toys"R"Us Holiday Express stores. With Holiday Express volunteers packing some of the 15,000 gift bags we distribute annually in the background, NBC, NJN and several newspaper reporters listened as Tim spoke about the 17-year history of the charity he founded, and his concern that the public may wrongly think they are supporting the mission of Holiday Express by shopping at Toys"R"Us Holiday Express stores. The charity fears that this potential confusion will jeopardize the financial support that it receives from individual donors and organizations and on which Holiday Express so substantially relies.

All Holiday Express wants is for Toys"R"Us to stop using our name. The holiday season is the most important fundraising time period for our organization. Every penny counts for us and if even one person thinks they are supporting Holiday Express by shopping at a Toys"R"Us Holiday Express store, that lost money takes away from us being able to fulfill our mission.

Holiday Express' efforts to meet and discuss the use of the name with Toys"R"Us were initially ignored and then declined by the Toys"R"Us legal department. Toys"R"Us did, however, affirmatively inform Holiday Express that Toys"R"Us would not stop using the "Holiday Express" name.

November 27

**Red Bank River Center Holiday Express Concert and Town Lighting** – For the 16th year, Holiday Express kicked off the season with a free concert in downtown Red Bank. The town closes off Broad Street and a stage is set up right in the middle of the road. More than 5,000 people jammed the street on this chilly and windy night to enjoy the medley of holiday favorites performed by Tim McLoone and Holiday Express. Everyone cheered in delight as the switch was flipped to illuminate the trees lining the street.



December 9

**Christmas Spectacular Benefit Concert at New Jersey Performing Arts Center**, Newark, NJ. Holiday Express once again brought its "Ultimate Holiday Show" to NJPAC. Holiday Express blended a unique mixture of traditional, gospel and "rock & soul" holiday music for a spectacular performance.

December 12

**NJ 101.5 Big Joe Henry Extravaganza** – Holiday Express was invited to perform at the 7th annual NJ 101.5 and Big Joe Henry's Christmas Extravaganza at Jenkinson's in Point Pleasant, NJ. The benefit concert raised money for New Jersey children's charities: St. Clare's Home for Children, Jason's Dreams for Kids and Project Little Soldiers. Other performers included Southside Johnny and Pat Guadagno. Holiday Express has been honored to perform the past seven years.

December 15 and December 16

**Count Basie Christmas Spectacular Benefit Concerts** included special guests Paul Thomas, The Holy Cross School Christmas Choir with Lunch Break Kids and The Boys and Girls Club of Red Bank along with Peter Reinhart, Rusty Young and Charlie Parton.



# Helping Holiday Express Deliver Volunteer Spotlight

*The extravert and the introvert! Meet Jeanne Westendorf, powerful vocalist and life of the party; at the other end of the spectrum, meet Jeff Fraller, quiet and determined, a strong man in the background.*

## Jeanne Westendorf

In 1994 my friend and co-worker at Riverview Hospital, Amy Robinson, invited me to a Holiday Express concert at Tradewinds. There was a snow storm that night and Bruce Springsteen showed up. The band was big and amazing. There was so much energy on stage and I found the whole concept quite inspiring.

Knowing that I am "crafty," the following year Amy asked me if I wanted to go with her and volunteer with Holiday Express. After the meeting, Tim told general volunteers to sign up over here and band/singer types to sign up over there. Something inside me said sign up for the band and the rest is history. I always tell people it is the best thing I ever did.

Before I joined Holiday Express, I was a "closet singer." Tim and the other musicians gave me the love and support I needed to get out and sing all the time, not just at Christmas. And what better front man then to learn from but Mr. Tim McLoone.

I can't believe it but I have been singing with the band for the last fifteen years! At events, I also love to help out with the crafts before the band starts. As far as my favorites events – there are so many – but to name a few, A. Harry Moore, Trenton Soup Kitchen, School for Children and Matheny.

I always leave an event feeling like we made a difference in the peoples' lives that we visited, even though it may have only been for a few hours. I have made some great friendships through Holiday Express as well.

In my family, I am the last of five; we are all close and live in Monmouth County. I have two beautiful nieces and six dashing nephews (they will kill me for saying that!). My parents always

encouraged us to volunteer our time. My sister Tara volunteered with Holiday Express a few years ago as a face painter, and worked on the dinner dance. Soon after, my brother Jack and his wife Patti became volunteers, which always make the bus trip home that much more fun.

My two girlfriends joined a couple years after me, Kim Devine and Karen Butler. Donna Edington, Program Director loved them because they were willing to put on the crazy costumes. They are now raising gorgeous little babies! I am so happy for them.

I work as the office manager for Specialty Surgical Associates in Shrewsbury. The practice specializes in Laparoscopic Surgery. I have been working in the medical field for the last fifteen years, and became a certified procedural coder five years ago.

I have the best of both worlds with my music. I have two cover bands, **The JW Trio** and **Miss Jeanne and The Fakers**. The trio

is light and easy, and when I want to rock out I have the Fakers to play with. I love to sing with both bands and all the musicians have become great friends of mine.

And for once in my life I am in love – we met a few years ago. Good things really do come to those who wait. So when I'm not working, I'm hanging around Red Bank with my honey, Timmy. Yes, there are two Timmys in my life! I have to be very careful when sending sexy texts since their names are obviously near each other on my phone. Ha! Ha!

There have been so many memorable moments over the last fifteen years. I love going out into the audience to sing "Candles Burning Low" and handing the microphone over to someone and hearing the voice that comes out – so pure and incredible. Some of the most fun moments occur after the event on the bus ride home. We've often yelled to Fred, our fearless bus driver, "don't stop Fred, keep the bus going, we're having too much fun."



## Jeff Fraller

I first heard about Holiday Express back in 1996 from my sister-in-law, Helen Doyle. She called me up one December evening to tell me about a fundraising concert that Holiday Express was putting on at the Tradewinds.

My wife, Jacqueline, and I went to the Tradewinds concert, and were impressed by the music. But we were even more impressed by the message the group was relaying to the audience. This message – about "delivering the gift of human kindness" – was later reinforced by listening to Helen talk at Christmas dinner about her Holiday Express experience. It really piqued our interest.

The following year I asked how I could get my Boy Scout troop involved. Before I knew it, "elves" were delivering loads of candy to my house for me to bring to the Boy Scout meetings. The Scouts would put bags of candy together that go into the gift bags Holiday Express provides to clients, and I would deliver them to the warehouse.

Jacqueline and I volunteered together for the first year. By the second year our daughter, Jessica (now age 10), was born so Jacqueline kindly let me continue volunteering with my Holiday Express family. A few years later, our son, Joseph (now age 7), was born. I can't wait until they are older and the four of us can all volunteer together at an event.

My interests include hiking, bike riding, basketball, coaching my son's sports teams and Scouting. I serve as an Assistant Scoutmaster for Boy Scout Troop 148 in Long Branch.

At Holiday Express events, I have performed a variety of duties – handling out gift bags, serving food, or donning any costume character I can fit into. I serve as Event Manager for several events during our Season. I enjoy managing events at new places. It is very challenging figuring out the logistics for a first time event as you meet with the director of the facility. However, the best part of being somewhere for the first time is that neither Holiday Express or the guests quite know what to expect. The reaction after each first time event is always the same. We can't wait until next year!

I am a CPA and work for Lawrence B Goodman & Co., PA, an accounting and consulting firm that specializes in Dental Practices. Because of my experience as a CPA, I was invited to join the Holiday Express Board of Trustees and serve as treasurer, a position I have held for the past four years. I obtain a great deal of satisfaction dealing with the inner working of the organization and see first-hand how wonderful and committed each Board/Committee member is to our cause.

One of my most memorable Holiday Express experiences occurred the first time we traveled to St. John's Soup Kitchen in Newark. It was Christmas Eve morning and it had snowed a little through the night. As we got off the bus we saw this was literally a soup KITCHEN. There was no room for the guests to eat inside. They took their food and either sat on the curb in the parking lot or stood at makeshift tables fastened to a fence, lightpole or street sign.



The sound crew had already set up the equipment and microphones, with wires running all over the snow. We found out that our drummer could not make it. We all wondered if everyone was willing to stand around in a freezing parking lot and listen to the small troupe of volunteers we had that day.

As soon as the music started the tiny crowd started to build. The "elves" were encouraging the guests to dance and the band was working hard getting the group

involved by passing around the microphone. As I witnessed this, the first thought that came to mind was "I hope no one gets electrocuted from all these wires running over the snow."

My second thought was, "Wow, I guess everyone knows the words to "Silent Night." And this thought was confirmed after the show as we were sitting on the bus waiting to pull away. The priest came on board with tears in his eyes and said, "You have given us such a wonderful Christmas present. I want to return the favor by telling you something remarkable that just happened." He continued, "There was a young man who has been visiting St. John's for several months now. He has never made eye contact nor said a word to anyone. We have tried to get information from him, so we can apply for benefits on his behalf, to no avail. That young man was the second person to sing when you passed around the microphone during "Silent Night." We did not think he could speak."

I think of that moment every Christmas Eve and every time I hear that song. That event has evolved a lot since then. We pledged never to have those guests sit on a snowy curb while we are there. Every Christmas Eve since that first show, the guests have been served a full sit-down meal, courtesy of the staff at McLoone's, under a large heated tent...with a band with a drummer.

This is just one story from countless events over the years that epitomizes what Holiday Express is all about.



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



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## SAVE THE DATE!

**2010**  
**Holiday Express**  
**Golf Classic**  
Monday, July 19, 2010  
Manasquan River Golf Club

### 2010 SPECIAL EVENTS

Golf Classic  
July 19

Sunset Clambake  
September 19

Count Basie  
December 15  
and  
December 16

NJPAC  
December 21

**Holiday Express**  
Third Annual  
**Benefit Clambake**  
Sunday, September 19  
on the Beach at  
McLoone's Pier House, Long Branch, NJ

Lavish Buffet  
Rare Feet  
Ocean Breezes  
Dancing Galore