

SEASONS

LOOKING BACK ON THE 2012 HOLIDAY EXPRESS® SEASON

HOLIDAY EXPRESS: THE FIRST 20 YEARS

HOLIDAY EXPRESS:
IT'S A FAMILY AFFAIR

GROWING UP
HOLIDAY EXPRESS

ELF ON THE STREET

DELIVERING THE GIFT OF HUMAN KINDNESS



HOLIDAY EXPRESS®

CREDITS & BOARD MEMBERS

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

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Graphic Design – desantis creative

Contributing Editors

Joanne Colella, Donna Edington, Ashley Hadar, Phyllis McQuillan, Tim McLoone, Eileen Moon, Christine Mosher, Eric Peterson, Donald Pignataro, Amy Robinson, Jill Weiss

Special Thanks to Donna Edington for her pristine scrapbooks and 20 years of stories

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Holiday Express is a registered 501(c)(3) organization

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CONTACT INFORMATION

968 Shrewsbury Avenue
Tinton Falls, NJ 07724

732-544-8010

Email: holidayexpress@comcast.net

Website: www.holidayexpress.org

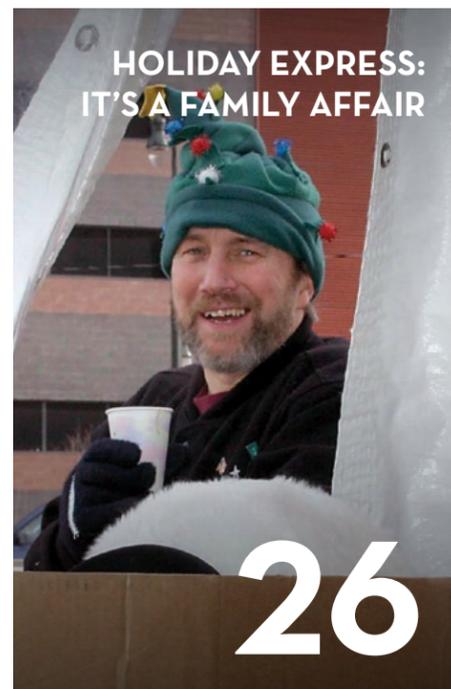
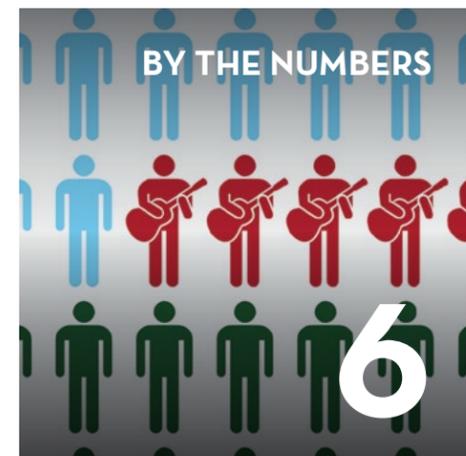


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MESSAGE FROM TIM MCLOONE

WHEN we began Holiday Express in 1993, I don't think any of us was thinking about where we would be 20 years and 860 events later. It has been an amazing experience to say the least....and people have noticed. I cannot go anywhere in our area and beyond without hearing about how much everyone loves and appreciates Holiday Express. As much as I would like to take all of the credit (and I occasionally do!), it is clear that we are so good at what we do because of our indefatigable office staff and volunteer base. I don't know how you all do it, but please keep going. Our "clients" really depend on us and, as we head into yet another decade of service to the less fortunate, we have to doubly ensure that we never.... ever....let them down. Thank you all.



MESSAGE FROM DONALD PIGNATARO

AT the core of Holiday Express are caring volunteers, they are our past, our present and our future. Our community of kindhearted individuals makes this organization special and unique. Two decades ago Holiday Express was created to serve those who are underserved. Gathering the stories and information for this 20th season yearbook has been very enlightening. The passion for what we do is amazing and the dedication of so many people is a testament to Tim's vision. The music is the centerpiece it has brought together many extraordinary people and the bonds formed make a difference in both the lives of those served and those who serve. As you read through the history and relive some of the moments, you

realize there is certainly something special about Holiday Express. The letters from the directors, the cards from the students, the smiling eyes of those who can't speak and the outstretched hand of someone who isn't often touched, convey a message that the community we serve truly needs us. Additionally, in many ways our volunteers also need Holiday Express. By serving those in need with an outpouring of kindness and compassion they are rewarded with more satisfaction and happiness than just about any other endeavor in their lives.

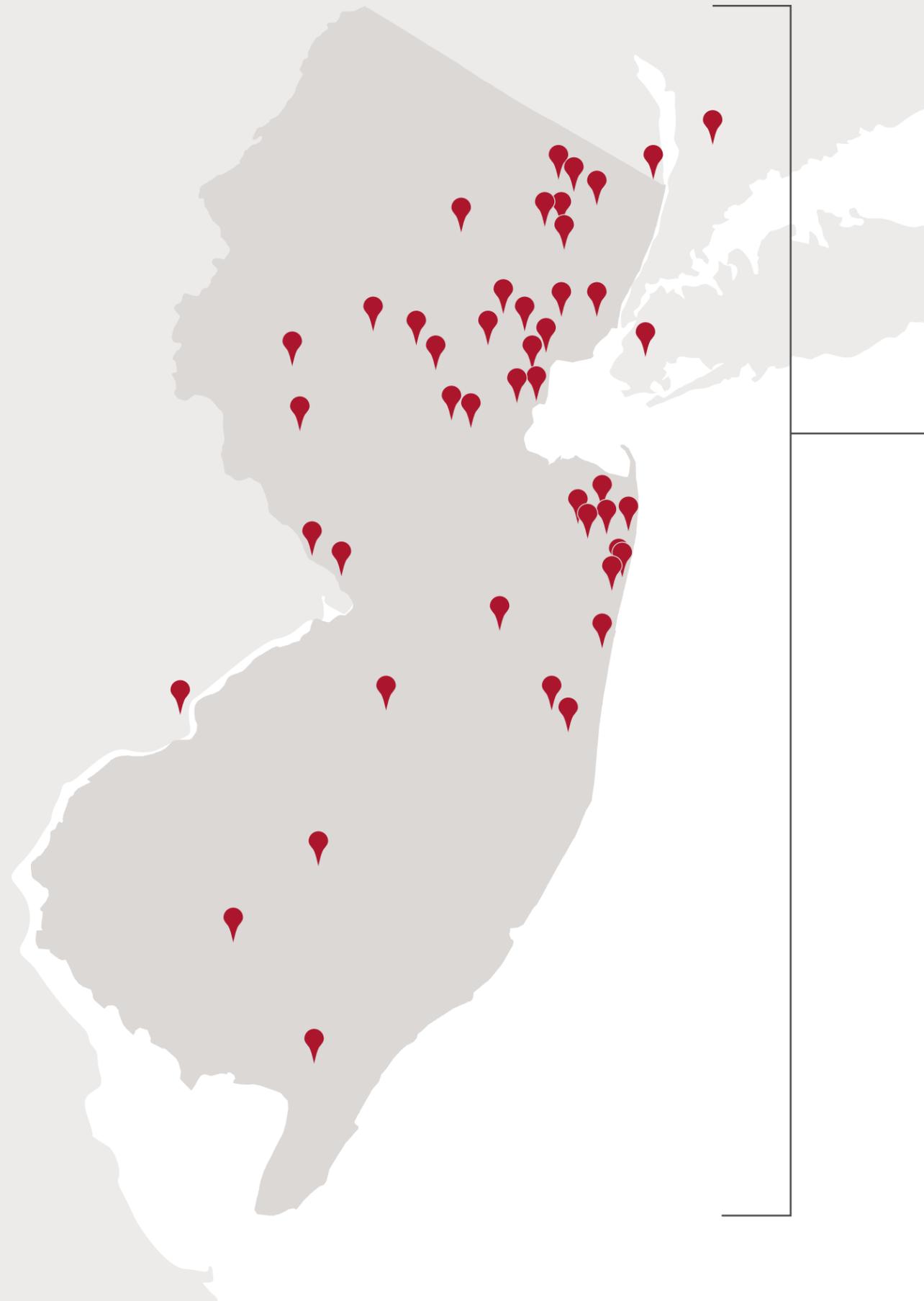
While superstorm Sandy disrupted the lives of so many in our area, we stayed true to our mission and did not miss a single organization we were scheduled to visit. Understandably, our revenue and product donations took a hit, but thanks to our loyal supporters we again delivered music, food and gifts to more than 15,000 individuals who live challenged lives every day.

Much has changed since 1993, yet much has remained the same. Whether our musicians and volunteers are at a soup kitchen or a theatre, on the floor of a worn gym or a new arena, down in the basement or out in a tent, riding the bus or driving the truck, signing a song or packing a gift bag, serving food or carrying a box, wearing a costume or painting a face, we simply want the people we visit to feel included in the holiday spirit.

Thank you for your passionate support, you got us started, sustained us through 20 years and help us look to the future.



2012 SEASON BY THE NUMBERS



6 NEW EVENTS

35 DAYS OF EVENTS

59 EVENTS

10,000 MILES TRAVELLED

NUMBER OF EVENTS BY TYPE

13 Adult Special Needs Programs	5 Soup Kitchens
13 Schools for Children with Special Needs	4 Public Performances
6 Developmental Centers	3 Children's Hospitals
6 Cerebral Palsy Sites	2 Psychiatric Hospitals
5 Medical and Educational Facilities	2 Recovery/Shelter Residency Programs

MORE THAN 1,500 VOLUNTEERS IN 2012



 = 600 AWESOME VOLUNTEERS

 = 100 MUSICIANS

 = 100 EMPLOYEES & FAMILIES FROM 5 CORPORATE GROUPS

 = 200 NEW VOLUNTEERS

 = 300 STUDENTS FROM 24 YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

 = 200 ADULTS VOLUNTEERED INDEPENDENTLY



15,000 HOURS VOLUNTEERED



RAFFLE GIFTS

1,000 ITEMS TO
200 WINNERS
AT 29 EVENTS



GIFT BAGS

800 VOLUNTEERS PACKED GIFT BAGS
MORE THAN 15,000 GIFT BAGS DISTRIBUTED
\$600,000 TOTAL ESTIMATED VALUE OF GIFT BAGS



FOOD SERVED

MORE THAN 5,000 SUBS
5,000 BAGS OF CHIPS
3,500 HOT MEALS
1,500 SLICES OF PIZZA

ELF ON THE STREET



THE FIRST TIME I VOLUNTEERED...

"I felt so overwhelmed with the love and joy the volunteers were sharing with other people."
—Jaclyn Kulch

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

"I felt like I had done something good, really good, for my fellow man."
—Mark Murphy

"My cheeks hurt from smiling, my eyes stung from tears and my heart burst with joy."
—Beth Sarre

"I felt a sense of pure joy. I have volunteered all my life, but there was something extra magical."
— Barbara Willis

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

PERFORMING WITH THE BAND DURING OUR CLIENT EVENTS, I PERSONALLY CONNECT WITH GUESTS BY...

"Remembering that we are all the same. Whether physically, emotionally or economically disabled, our audiences are just like us...people."
—Amy Broza

BEING A COSTUME CHARACTER AT A HOLIDAY EXPRESS EVENT IS MEANINGFUL TO ME BECAUSE...

"It lights up the faces of even the most introverted or troubled people. Those who seldom dance, dance. Those who seldom sing, sing!"
—Betty Marschall



I GIVE SO MUCH OF MY PERSONAL TIME BECAUSE...

"It's awesome, it's a no brainer because it makes me feel wonderful, and the clients love just energizes you."
—Kathy Severini

"The look on the faces of the people we visit is priceless. They are so happy we are there. For those that can't speak, it's the light in their eyes."
—Dana Perkins

"Bringing a smile and making eye contact with children with severe multiple disabilities was so overwhelmingly gratifying...I forget myself."
— Carole Beal

"It's an organization of people, real people that care in the most unselfish way."
—Jerry Pashin

HOLIDAY EXPRESS HAS IMPACTED MY LIFE BY...

"Opening my eyes to how much our organization is needed and appreciated"
—Shannon Ryan Six

"I was always grateful for my career in teaching, but Holiday Express has given me new opportunities to help bring joy to so many children and adults who have varied disabilities."
—Patty Napolitano

"Giving me Christmas. Christmas had always been very sad to me but now I look forward to having the best holiday in the world!"
— Ken C., a Veteran, Lyons VA

WHEN DESCRIBING HOLIDAY EXPRESS TO OTHERS, I TELL THEM...

"It's more than a concert! There is so much that goes into a Holiday Express show and just describing it to others seems to fall short. I say to those who have not had the full on Holiday Express experience, you will not be the same going out as you were going in."
—Jim Skitka, St. Joseph's School for the Blind

ELF ON THE STREET *continued...*



THE MOST CHALLENGING MOMENT FOR ME WAS...

“When I see children or adults with no one there for them.”
—Renee Altshul

“When I volunteered to do tattoos and realized how much touching this required. I was hesitant at first, distracted about cleanliness and hygiene. At some point, I turned around and saw another volunteer take the hand of a resident. It snapped me back to what my purpose was for being there.” —Diana Sutton

MY FAVORITE PART OF RIDING THE HOLIDAY EXPRESS BUS...

“It would be politically incorrect to say “the beer” right?”
—Amy Broza

“The camaraderie and the excitement of sharing the stories while we crack a beer and laugh all the way home, exhilarated from the show.” —Valerie Schiafone

THE MOST JOYFUL MOMENT FOR ME WAS...

“Being told after the shows that usually unresponsive guests were visibly reacting to the music.” —Lee Howard

“The homeless man at St. Paul’s in Paterson who sang better than anyone in the band.” —Amy Broza

“When a very quiet and sullen looking young man looked me in the eye, smiled, took my hand and started dancing.”
—Marie Maita

I SUPPORT BECAUSE...

“Tim and Holiday Express simply get it.” —Jim Skitka

“I have seen for myself the impact it makes in the lives of very special people.” —Suzanne Spice

“The clients we see. Just look into their eyes once...THAT’s why.” —Joe Petillo

“Caring matters.” —Barbara Willis

SOME KIND WORDS



STEVE GOLDBERG, PRINCIPAL, A. HARRY MOORE SCHOOL

“This has certainly been a very difficult year for many in our area. With the destruction that Hurricane Sandy brought to us and the grief and sorrow of the Newtown shootings, it remains difficult to keep up hope and remain positive. But, I am certainly lucky that my school – The A. Harry Moore School – has a secret weapon that provides us with enough hope, good will and good cheer to inoculate us from anything that the world might throw our way. That secret weapon is: the people, performers and our friends at HOLIDAY EXPRESS!!

Once again Holiday Express was there to provide us with a beacon of light to block out the darkness. I want you to know that you don’t only brighten our holiday season, but our entire school year. It is heartwarming to know that there are such good people out there whose only goal is to make a positive difference in the lives of children, faculty and staff. This year, again, you have accomplished that goal and for that we are eternally grateful.”

ANNE GUNTESKI, PRINCIPAL, HARBOR SCHOOL

“Our children sometimes go unnoticed and may seem hidden from the world. Holiday Express changed this when they saw our need and reached out with a helping hand. The promise of an event with live music, food and gifts had never been offered before. But more importantly, we were going to be part of a celebration with people who just wanted to give us their time, attention and unconditional acceptance. Holiday Express is a celebration of life. It’s as if all the daily challenges faced by our children are temporarily replaced by music, compassion, empathy, kindness, understanding, joy and the gift of hope. The entire Holiday Express organization thankfully gives us this gift each year and seems to find us just when we need it most.”

GROWING UP HOLIDAY EXPRESS

The twenty-year history of Holiday Express not only marks an important milestone for the organization, but also represents a huge portion of the lives of individuals who have been touched by its mission in one way or another. Some of them, in fact, have practically “grown up” alongside Holiday Express.



Ryan serving food

RYAN CELESTINO

Volunteer and musician Ryan Celestino, recalls, “I began working with Holiday Express nineteen years ago, when I was seven. My family and I began packing gift bags in the ‘warehouse’ when it was just a room in a volunteer’s business. My father became involved in the band and I couldn’t wait to join, but I was too young. My mother became a Junior Volunteer Coordinator, which increased my involvement. From fourth grade to junior year of high school, I spent at least three days a week working in the warehouses. In high school, I was still volunteering in the warehouse and appreciated the “dirty work” that countless volunteers

did behind the scenes, but also had the chance to play at shows and see how the music impacts those we serve. I love both parts of Holiday Express and have been fortunate to experience them both.” These days, Ryan encourages his students in Washington, DC to get involved by packing bags for events and comes home in December to perform and volunteer as much as he can. He adds, “The Celestino Christmas Eve tradition is, and has been for 19 years, to volunteer at St. John’s, and now at the Trinity soup kitchens. I will not have it any other way; it means so much to all of us involved.”



Tommy helping at a Holiday Express event

TOMMY D'AMBOLA

Sound technician, Tommy D'Ambola, first became aware of Holiday Express when he was eleven or twelve years old and the group performed at the hospital where his teenage sister was being treated for cancer. The Holiday Express visits made an impression on him, and years later, through his involvement with music, he began working with JK Audio, who also turned out to be, to Tommy’s pleasant surprise, the Holiday Express sound company. “I began to do sound

for Holiday Express,” he explained, “and working with such incredible musicians has been an inspiration to me. As the years went by, I got more involved, and now I get to give something back. Last year, I helped serve food at a church, and I got my girlfriend involved this year. Working with the musicians and interacting with the clients has been a dream come true; the reaction from people we visit at the shows is overwhelming.”



Tracy, shown with Elliott Yamin band mates

TRACY COSENTINO

Tracy Cosentino was about seven or eight when her parents started bringing her along to Holiday Express shows, and says, “I loved it; to me it was a little adventure we were going on. I was in awe of the musicians and all the people. I don’t think I truly understood what was going on until I was older. I remember going to a show where there was a little boy in a wheelchair, who got incredibly excited when I handed him a gift and I thought, ‘Wow, it’s just a Beanie Baby.’ His mom thanked me and said she wanted to get him one all year and now he had one for Christmas. That was pretty much what he was getting that year, and it meant that much to

him. It was then that it all made sense to me. I was hooked. Throughout the years, my role in Holiday Express evolved. When I was young, I would go to almost every show that my parents did. In high school, other things got in the way, but my parents did an amazing job of keeping me involved and I still loved going. Now as an adult, Holiday Express has a whole new meaning to me. It’s just not Christmas if I haven’t danced around in a Rudolf costume. Being involved in an organization like this has shaped me as a person. I plan on raising my own children the same way. I am proud to be in the next generation of Holiday Expressers.”



Betty, shown with her niece, Liza, 2011

BETTY MARSCHALL

When Elizabeth (Betty) Marschall, a Tim McLoone fan for thirty years, moved from the Jersey shore to New Orleans, she continued to visit several times a year to spend time with her beautiful, disabled niece, Liza, and watched as Holiday Express began and grew. “The Christmas CDs became a staple of our holiday season,” she explains. “Liza loved music and it was a favorite of hers as she ‘danced’ in her wheelchair and smiled.” Eight years ago, Betty got custody of Liza and moved back to Long Branch. “I started attending the Holiday Express events at LADACIN with Liza and watched as people who usually have a hard time participating became animated and vocal. It was an extraordinary realization to me

what the power of music, attention, and good will from the volunteers could do for this wonderful sector of our population. And this feeling kept with me throughout the year.” That feeling, she explained, lives on in a special way. “Last April, my gorgeous Liza passed away. I was lost. One of the first things I did was to sign up as a Holiday Express volunteer, as now I had the time to ‘pay back.’ It was indeed bittersweet, as I miss her so. But it filled a big empty space. You get to be a part of what puts smiles on those beautiful faces. The love that comes back at you when they dance and sing is a gift. I imagine my Liza is with there with us, loving every minute, helping me to bring her smile to others.”

PAYING IT FORWARD



HOLIDAY EXPRESS

THE FIRST



YEARS

1993 - 2012

IN THE EARLY 1990s, while Tim McLoone was working for the New Jersey Nets as an arena announcer, he accompanied the team to a hotel in downtown Newark that was serving free meals to homeless people on Christmas Eve.

For Tim, it was a profoundly moving experience. Seeing so many people in need and witnessing their gratitude for the gift of a hot meal inspired Tim to think about what more he could do to bring a little holiday joy to people who had so little.

What else besides food for the body? How about a little food for the soul?

Music had been part of Tim's life since his earliest years, and by the early 1990s, he was a successful musician and restaurateur whose name was already well known on the Jersey Shore.

He knew the magic music had worked in his own life, and the lives of his fellow musicians. He had a feeling they might not mind sharing a little of that magic with some folks who could really use it.

“We only had about 15 or 20 songs we all knew.”

He wasn't expecting any miracles. After all, what difference can a party make? Tim and the small band of musicians and volunteers he recruited were about to find out.

Everybody had questions, but many of the answers would be years in the making. “Back then, our game plan evolved show by show,” said founding volunteer and Holiday Express board member Donna Edington.

THE NAME

Among the first items on the agenda was what this group would be called.

“The group wanted to seem mobile, like we'd go anywhere,” said Amy Robinson, Director of Operations for Holiday Express, who joined as

THE MUSIC

The band Tim wanted to create had to be good enough to attract the caliber of musicians he wanted. “No one would want to be involved if the music wasn't good, and no one would want to have us perform,” he said. “We wanted to offer great, free music.”

For the musicians that Tim had hand-picked, Holiday Express offered an opportunity to perform with other musicians they'd always wanted to play with, but never had the chance. “It was very convivial,” Tim recalled.



TELEVISION APPEARANCES

From 1998 through 2000, Holiday Express was a featured act on NBC's national broadcast of the annual Rockefeller Center Tree Lighting.

Saturday, December 7, 1998, Holiday Express performed on the Weekend Edition of the Today Show, hosted by Tim's good friend, Jack Ford.

December 24, 2010, The Holiday Express story is featured on the “Making a Difference” segment aired by The NBC Nightly News with Brian Williams.



THE COSTUME CHARACTERS

Almost from the start, Frosty, Rudolph, the Grinch, Cookie Monster, Elmo, Mrs. Claus and Santa have been regulars at the events.

THE FIRST MEETING

On November 15, 1993, Tim presented his idea to the small group of musicians and other friends he'd invited to be part of whatever he was about to create.

“The excitement and enthusiasm was something none of us had experienced before,” founding volunteer Helen Doyle recalled recently.

a volunteer in 1995. “Around that time, The Traveling Wilburys had a popular album, so the group considered the Traveling Jingleberries which was a play on words.”

The name Holiday Express was ultimately chosen by popular acclaim; Holiday indicating the group's nonsectarian identity, and Express to communicate that this would be a traveling band.

But there was a lot to learn.

At first, he said, “We only had about 15 or 20 songs we all knew.” Over the years, the Holiday Express repertoire would grow to more than 100 songs.

In those early days, Donna was in charge of all the music books. She hand-wrote all the lyrics to all the songs, including what became the band's signature anthem, “Alone On Christmas,” which the author,



THE GIFT BAG

That first year, volunteers individually wrapped each gift in festive holiday paper. The more practical gift bag replaced the gift wrap, allowing multiple pieces in each bag including warm clothing, blankets, personal care items, candy, books, stuffed animals and other goodies tailored to the needs of the particular party guest.

“We were literally flying by the seat of our pants,”

E Street Band and Sopranos star Little Steven Van Zandt, had given the band permission to sing. The Holiday Express version of the song is slightly different from the original, simply because Donna made an error when she was transcribing the words for the songbooks.

THE SLOGAN

“*Delivering the Gift of Human Kindness*” is penned by Eileen Moon, then of the Two River Times, which not only became the tagline but also defined the character of the organization.

THE FIRST SHOW

On a chilly December morning in 1993, a small, but merry, band of 17 musicians and 12 volunteers climbed on a rented bus and headed up the turnpike for New England.

It was fitting that the first-ever gig for this legend in the making was at a social service program called ‘Better Beginnings.’ Tim’s friend, Sara Tucker, had invited him to perform at this Junior League-sponsored program that provided parenting classes and learning activities for very young mothers and their children.

A number of the families who attended were recent immigrants whose first languages were Spanish and Creole.

Tim doesn’t remember which song he chose to kick off that first-ever performance by Holiday Express, but he thinks it might have been Elvis’ “Santa Bring My Baby Back (To Me).”

It proved to be a tough crowd – in the beginning.

“It was really quite a daunting situation,” said Tim. “The place offered all kinds of educational services to its clients, but the hook to get them there for the event was to see us, a really loud party with a free band.”

Original volunteers remembered that as the families started to arrive and the excitement level rose, so did the anxiety level. Would this work? “It was chaotic,” Tim said. “But it was also kind of wonderful.”

Photographer Scott Longfield, snapping photos for a newspaper story, realized that day that he was destined to become the official Holiday Express photographer.

“I think all of us realized from that very first event that there was a need for what we were doing,” said saxophonist Rick Brunermer. “Something special had just occurred, and we all wanted to keep going.”

Holiday Express learned a lot from that first experience. Better Beginnings volunteers kept the children entertained with coloring and crafts –

activities that would eventually become part of Holiday Express shows, too.

THE FIRST SEASON

There were only ten events that first season, but every element of Holiday Express was being created, moving at breakneck speed from idea to reality in the space of a few meetings and phone calls.

“At first, I booked the whole thing, the events, the musicians, everything,” Tim recalled. “There was no e-mail back then, of course, so I would be in my kitchen on this wall phone for hours, calling people, trying to build a band around the events. I would also be trying to collect partners to help fund everything.”

“We were literally flying by the seat of our pants,” Donna added. “The Rum Runner in Sea Bright was our headquarters. We would go there between events, determine what we needed, call up local people and get donations, and then come back and wrap each gift individually. It was very difficult, very hand-to-mouth, and there was a lot of anxiety. And we all maxed-out our credit cards to pay for everything.”

“But three days later, the event would be over and it was, wow, how did we pull that off?”, she recalled. “Then, we were on to the next event and making mental notes about how to do things better. We were just trying to get to the next day, the next event – it was exhausting, but we learned a lot that first year. We weren’t a well-oiled machine yet, but we were getting there.”



THE GUEST ARTISTS

Ever since Bruce Springsteen made a surprise on-stage appearance at the Tradewinds during the December 1994 fundraising concert – and again in 2001 at the Continental Airlines Arena – many of the world’s most popular and respected recording artists and personalities have shared the stage with Holiday Express. Among them: Jon Bon Jovi, Southside Johnny, Darlene Love, Cyndi Lauper, Gary U.S. Bonds, Daryl Hall, Barenaked Ladies, Joe Piscopo, Rob Thomas, John Mayer, Dave Osborn, Dave Matthews and many more. Local hero Bobby Bandiera – a former Asbury Juke, current member of Bon Jovi’s touring band and an original member of Holiday Express – is a prime example of the caliber of elite musician that Holiday Express attracts.

THE DOCUMENTARY

Filmed during the 2001 season, documentarians Nancy Sabino and Michael Sodano followed Holiday Express on a month-long, 50-event season schedule. The award-winning film, *Rock and a Heart Place* was shown on the big screen in Red Bank, NYC and Albany, New York and was later released on DVD.

“How can you not want to give everything you have?”

“We were a determined group,” Helen recalled. “There was never a thought that we could not do something or that we would have to say no to someone. We got better with each event. We all felt that what we, as Holiday Express, were taking home from the events far exceeded what we were able to give. That made us more determined to do more and to do it better. We all had full time jobs, but every one of us made time for the Holiday Express mission. We’d be arriving at the Rum Runner at 6 p.m. or 7 p.m. – working out of an unheated trailer and before you know it – it was midnight.”

Helen added, “I remember at one of the first shows seeing families waiting on line to have their family photo taken by the tree. The kids were all dressed in their holiday finest. One of the women from Better Beginnings said that this is important for these families, because most of them do not have their own Christmas tree. That image has stayed with me to this day. How can you not want to give everything you have? So we did – and we do!”

THE FUNDRAISERS

In December 1993, Holiday Express held its first benefit concert at Tradewinds in Sea Bright.

“We had spent \$10,000 that first season on bus rentals, equipment rentals, food, etc. All out of our own pockets,” Tim said. “At the end of the year we knew we had to recoup at least some of it, so we worked with the Tradewinds and charged \$10 admission. It was a great turnout, a packed house.”

When the final numbers were tallied, everyone was relieved that Holiday Express ended up only \$130 in the red that first year.

Little did we know that the very first benefit concert would be the springboard for the annual Holiday Express Benefit Concerts held at the Count Basie Theatre and the New Jersey Performing Arts Center.

As funding needs increased the Holiday Express Dinner Dance followed. It was held at the Shore Casino in Atlantic Highlands for several years before moving to Ocean Place in Long Branch.

In 2008, the fancy dinner dance gave way to the Sunset Clambake, a casual beach party held in September under an enormous tent on the beach, with the beautiful back drop of the Atlantic Ocean.

The Holiday Express Golf Classic held at Manasquan River Golf Club is a premier outing in the area and another key funding event.

HOLIDAY EXPRESS “MOMENTS”

Everyone associated with Holiday Express knows about “the moments” – something that happens at an event that touches your heart and soul.

The movie *Space Jam* had just been released the first year that the band played at Blythedale Children’s Hospital in Valhalla, New York.

“The kids there were very sick, severely injured or handicapped, and some of them had been injured by their parents – tragic,” Rick recalled.

“The band was playing “I Believe I Can Fly,” a very popular song from the movie. Delores Holmes was singing and when she got to the chorus, suddenly these kids started singing at the top of their lungs. Prior to that, we weren’t even sure some of them were aware we were there. These kids carried the show – it was so moving, the entire band was broken up.”

Another special Holiday Express moment occurred during a visit to Trenton Psychiatric Hospital. “One guy was hogging the microphone – he would not give it up, and the caregivers were all pointing at him,” Tim recalled. “As it turned out, he had not spoken a word since he’d been there – he’d just been a ‘John Doe.’ But he completely opened up after that,” Tim said.

“We are told all the time, by the professionals at the various locations, about the impact we can and do have on their residents and patients,” Tim said. “These are just a few examples of what makes our efforts worthwhile, for everyone involved.”



THE WAREHOUSE

At the start of Holiday Express, Tim kept all of the equipment and supplies in his garage. As the organization grew, the staging area expanded from a trailer in the parking lot of McLoone’s Rum Runner and the trunks of volunteers’ cars to a series of warehouses of increasing size. Holiday Express moved into its present 8,500-square-foot Tinton Falls location in 2001.

The warehouse is where the planning and logistics of the season takes place. It’s where hundreds of the elves work, packing thousands upon thousands of gift bags for our clients every holiday season.

THE GIVING PARTNERS PROGRAM

Originally called the Corporate Partnering Program, volunteer Eileen Moon created the title “Giving Partners” to highlight the human connection that is the hallmark of Holiday Express.

The idea evolved from Tim’s desire to invite Holiday Express’s generous donors to experience for themselves the magic that occurs at a Holiday Express event. The goal: for “partners” to purchase a gift themselves, and then travel with Holiday Express to present the gift personally and experience the joy and satisfaction of having made a difference in the lives of others.



THE GROWTH

“We knew right away it was going to grow,” Donna said. “We had – and have – a great leader with a great vision. We went from a \$0 budget in the first year to \$1 million now, from a few wrapped presents to 15,000 gift bags and a warehouse with hundreds of thousands of items, from a handful of musicians and 10 events to 1,500 volunteers and 60 events. From rotary wall phones to personal mobile devices and social media. We started with an idea, and continue to expand.”

Recently, Rick has recruited some of his music students to audition for the band, already grooming the next generation of Holiday Express volunteers. Not that he’s hanging up his sax anytime soon: “It’s become the

most meaningful thing I’ve ever done,” he said. “It’s changed my life for the better. The holidays would not be the same without Holiday Express.”

“I know we aren’t curing diseases, but we are making a difference,” said Amy. “I can only see it expanding even more. Human kindness is a wonderful thing, especially for those who don’t get it on a regular basis.”

“Holiday Express grew very organically,” Tim said. “It rumbled ahead and people brought all different types of talent and skills. We collected investors with sweat equity – they gave their money or their time, sometimes both. For us, it’s all about paying attention to those who get little or no attention at holiday time, or whose need is so great that they can’t possibly get enough attention.

“I know we aren’t curing diseases, but we are making a difference,”

The amazing thing about Holiday Express overall is, if you took a cross-section of our entire volunteer base, you’d find a lot of people of modest means who have just decided for their own personal reasons that this is where they want to be,” Tim concluded. “The Holiday Express message from all of us is we care about you.” 🎸

THE DISCO SANTAS

In November 1999, band members Jim Celestino, Scott Paden, Phil Rizzo and Roger Gardella dressed up as Santa Claus and wowed the annual dinner dance audience as “Disco Santas.” 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” made its debut that night. Result: Instant hit!

THE DANCERS

Red Bank’s Kathryn Barnett School of Dance youth troupe has performed at Holiday Express events since 1994. Their creative routines, festive costumes and boundless energy add a little glitter and a lot of pizzazz.

THE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Initially established in 2000 as one scholarship in memory of Columbine High School student Lauren Townsend, the program annually awards three scholarships to deserving students in the communities we serve.



THE TRIP TO COLUMBINE

In 1999, Holiday Express traveled to Littleton, Colorado to present a concert for the community that had been devastated by the shootings at Columbine High School.

“The night before the concert, we went to a restaurant and met with the families and students, and it was an intensely emotional experience,”

Tim said. “Everyone really bonded. The next night we played for close to 10,000 people in a parking lot. It was by invitation only – students and their families, EMS, police, fire, rescue workers. It was an emotional turning point for Holiday Express. We knew we had to do more, that we had to dig deeper and work to find the people who needed us.”

THE BUS

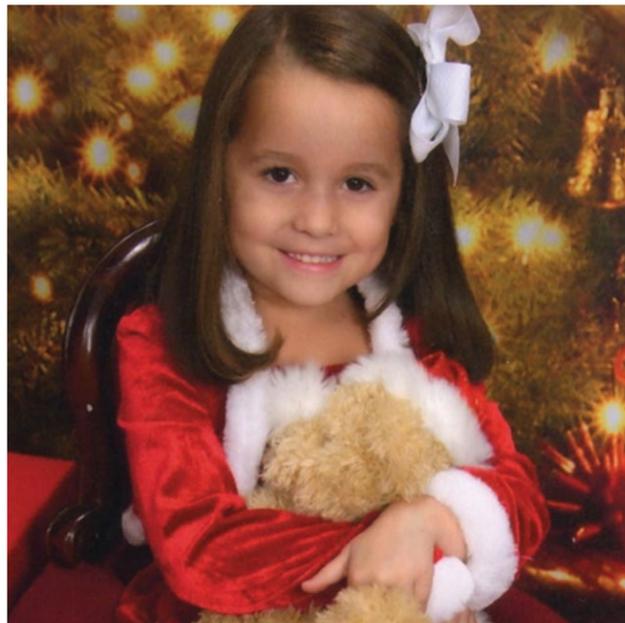
As the events, distance and volunteers increased a seasonally rented coach bus has become the means of travel. Donna brings the food, as she has from the beginning, and a cooler filled by elves makes for a great ride home. The bus is a welcoming ride where stories are told, laughs and tears are shared and friendships forged.

THE CDS

To date, four CDs of Holiday Express music have been released, including one of the live performances at Columbine. The very first CD, originally titled “*Delivered*” and re-released as Greatest Hits includes the ever-popular “Disco Santa,” the clever reworking of the Village People’s classic “Y.M.C.A.”

HOLIDAY EXPRESS: IT'S A FAMILY AFFAIR

That would be the Spahr family... four generations of commitment to Holiday Express. "It's been very, very rewarding," says family matriarch June Spahr. "It just brings certain things out of your character that you may not have realized you had."



Kaileigh Spahr

"It just brings certain things out of your character that you may not have realized you had."

It was the second generation, specifically June's daughter-in-law Tricia, who first volunteered for Holiday Express. June eventually attended a couple of shows with Tricia and, in her words, "I was hooked." Her volunteerism evolved as she became an expert craftswoman at the shows through the years.

June's eldest son Rich has also been a long-time volunteer, serving as a Holiday Express truck drive for 11 years and, more recently, drawing rave reviews for his portrayal of Santa Claus. His wife Patty is also on board. His younger brother Steve and wife Tricia complete the second generation of Spahrs on the Holiday Express volunteer roster. Steve, a retired captain of the Sea Bright Police Department, also drives a truck for the organization.

Rich's daughter Susan was the third generation...her untimely passing was remembered in the 2005 Holiday Express Yearbook. "I had decided to take her with me to a couple of show, and she just blossomed," June recalls.

Susan's daughter Kaileigh, now seven years old, is the fourth generation Spahr to volunteer...and probably not the last. "Rich would take her over to the warehouse, just to hang out," says June. "One day she said, suddenly, maybe they'll let me be an elf."

Rich initially had to be convinced to volunteer. "My mom finally convinced me, I went to an event and fell in love with it," he recalls. At that first event, "they needed some security, and Rich and Tony Cosentino ended up being the security that day," June says.

"A lot of people need help, and if you can bring some joy into their lives—it's the greatest thing in the world,"



Rich Spahr



June Spahr with Patty Spahr



Steve Spahr

In the ensuing years, "driving a truck for Holiday Express, and playing Santa is the greatest thing in the world," Rich says. "It can be emotional...and fortunately, when you wear a suit or costume, the children can't see your emotions."

For all four generations of Spahrs, there are those "Holiday Express moments" that founder and chairman Tim McLoone likes to refer to. For Rich, it was that first event he ever attended. "You always think how bad you've got it, and you go to one of the events and realize that there are people who are a lot worse off than you," he says. "A lot of people need help, and if you can bring some joy into their lives—it's the greatest thing in the world," he reiterates. "I found

this out at the first event I attended—it was my 'Holiday Express moment'."

"I was at a show in New Brunswick—they were challenged children," June recalls. "I was standing out in the hallway between breaks—there are times when you just have to walk away for awhile, just to get yourself together. A woman came up to me and said, 'I want to thank you so much. You were over with my son, and that's the first time in 10 years that I've seen my son laugh.'"

"Needless to say, I was crying by that time," she says.

"We also have done St. John's on Christmas Eve, and when we first started doing it, 100 people or so, mostly adults, were there," June says.

"Eventually, it evolved into an event of 1,000, I believe, with mostly children... with all these big eyes looking at you, it's very emotional. Everybody has had these experiences, these 'Holiday Express moments,' through the years."

Through the years, four generations of the Spahr family have remained committed to Holiday Express, through illness, an untimely passing, and other tribulations - Tricia, for example, is a town official in Sea Bright who has been, for months, dealing with the aftereffects of superstorm Sandy. That commitment will continue, because, as Rich re-emphasizes, giving the gift of human kindness "is the greatest thing in the world." 🍷

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2012 SOURCES OF REVENUE



2012 EXPENSES



YEAR-END TOTALS

Fiscal year end April 30	2012	2011
Total Revenue	\$1,127,625	\$1,272,713
Total Expenses	\$1,108,820	\$1,083,726

(includes non cash)

TWENTY YEARS





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