



Volunteers *Delivering the Gift of Human Kindness*

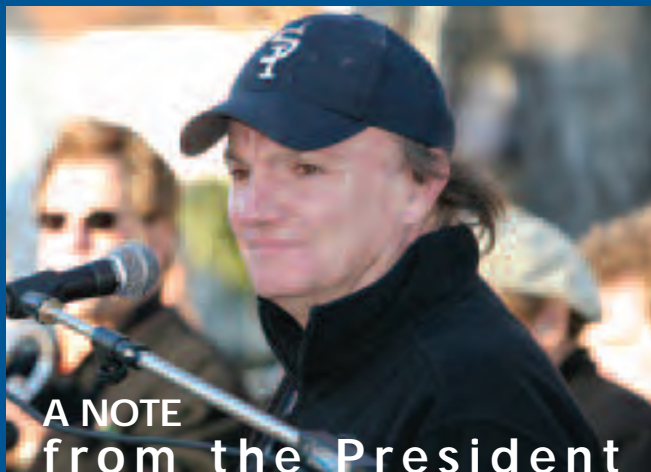
Holiday Express Yearbook

2005 Season



Traveling to the hurricane-devastated region was a lesson in the strength of the human spirit.





When I write each of these missives I try to think of something new or exciting about Holiday Express to share with you. Well, this certainly qualifies! If you have not already read or heard, we have a new Executive Director, Donald Pignataro. Don, who has been a volunteer with us for several years, brings an outstanding resume with him to his new position. Working in tandem with our Director of Operations, Amy Robinson, he will now be able to bring his considerable experience in the business as well as non-profit sectors to help take us to even greater heights. Welcome, Don.

Donald Pignataro, Executive Director

People – the common thread connecting the Holiday express families. As I embark on a new journey with this wonderful organization, there are many things to do. Meetings to attend, goods to acquire, emails to send and receive, contracts to sign, pallets to move, copy to write and rewrite, bills to pay, boxes to count, funds to raise and trucks to drive. The list is long and challenging, yet exciting and exhilarating.

The people I have met and not yet met, are the amazing foundation of the complex character connecting the Holiday Express extended family. There are volunteers, fans, supporters and the reason we exist, those in need. People travel many different roads during their life, some smooth, some bumpy, some dark and lonesome and some crowded with friends playing loud music and singing songs. If you have read this far in this message, you understand...

My role is not to change, but to enhance this success story. By designing a strategic plan and establishing a structure for measured growth, the people, the human capital of Holiday Express can feel confident their giving of themselves is making a difference.

I ask for your support and look forward to growing with the people of Holiday Express.



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

Layonne Holmes – Editor
Delores Holmes, Denise O'Hara, Barbara Willis
Graphic Design by Jill Weiss

Photos by Scott Longfield and HoEx friends

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

Board of Trustees

Timothy McLoone, President
Amy Broza, Vice President
Jim Celestino, Vice President
Paul Huegel, Vice President
Jane Denny, Recording Secretary
Barbara Murphy, Treasurer
Helen Doyle, Corresponding Secretary

Donald Pignataro, Executive Director
Amy Robinson, Director of Operations

Contact Information

968 Shrewsbury Ave., Tinton Falls, NJ 07724
Tel: (732) 544-8010 Fax: (732) 544-8020
email: hollexpress@comcast.net
<http://www.holidayexpress.org>



*In loving memory of
Susan Spahr,
Holiday Express Jr. Volunteer
for many years. Susan, the
daughter of Rich Spahr
and granddaughter of
June Spahr, both longtime
volunteers, loved being
part of Holiday Express.*

Holiday Express 2005 Season

S P O N S O R S

Red Bank Tree Lighting

Coors Light and Shore Point Distributors

New Jersey Performing Arts Center

Holiday Express Benefit Concert

December 7, 2005

Event Sponsor

Wachovia

Stage Sponsor

Donjon Marine Company, Inc.

Sound & Light Sponsors

Inserra Supermarkets, Inc.

Jackson Hewitt

Rider Insurance Company

Wakefern Food Corporation

Curtain Sponsors

Garden State Check Cashing

Horizon Foundation

Maier Terminals, Inc.

McGuggan, L.L.C.

Moretrench American Company

New York Giants

Northeast Remsco Construction

Railroad Construction

S.M. Electric Company

Suburban Propane

York Insurance Services Group

Cocktail Reception Sponsor

Wachovia Insurance Services

Patron Sponsors

Allied Beverage Group, L.L.C.

Architectural Window Manufacturing

Cambrex Corporation

Campmor, Inc.

Crisdel Group, Inc.

Eastern Fish

Ferreira Construction Company

Fisk Alloy Wire, Inc.

Henry P. Thomson, Inc.

J.G. Schmidt Company, Inc.

Janome America, Inc.

Liberty Travel, Inc.

McWilliams Forge & Company

Midstate Lumber

Myron Manufacturing

North Jersey Media Group

PSE&G

Registra & Transfer

RoNetco Supermarkets, Inc.

Troy Corporation

Verizon

Village Super Market, Inc.

Wallwork Group

Count Basie Theatre

Holiday Express Benefit Concert

December 20, 2005

Curtain Sponsor

Birdsall Services Group

Blythedale Children's Hospital

December 22, 2005

Performance Sponsor

New York Mercantile Exchange

Charitable Foundation

Journey to the Gulf



by Barbara Willis

Members of Holiday Express are no strangers to adversity. In the organization's 13-year existence, Holiday Express has witnessed the plight of tens of thousands of people who are struggling with poverty, illness, disabilities and loneliness. A trip to the Gulf region, however, proved that Holiday Express still had much to learn. The members and friends who took Holiday Express' unique brand of cheer to Louisiana and Mississippi came face to face with unfathomable conditions wherever they went and were overcome by the enormity of the need.

The idea of going to the Gulf was suggested at the September executive board meeting. The board decided early on that funds would have to be raised to make sure none of the regularly scheduled events were adversely affected. Holiday Express supporters quickly contributed the money that was needed.

While it normally takes months to firm up the November and December event schedule, the Gulf events were pulled together in a matter of weeks. According to Amy Broza, singer and trustee, "Countless calls and emails went out every day, including while we were in the Gulf, to make sure everything was in place." Connections were made with local and state government agencies, the military, church groups and non-profit organizations. "We were never sure how many people would be there or what elements of our regular Holiday Express events might work in any given venue or, for that matter, how we would be received," said Amy.

The moment of truth arrived on Monday, December 12. As Holiday Express founder Tim McLoone noted, "The first inkling we had that conditions were much worse than we had been led to believe came upon our approach to New Orleans Airport. We could see thousands of royal blue rooftops. It took only a moment to realize that these were not roofs, but tarps covering virtually every structure that was standing."

continued on next page





entertainment for a party organized by Father John O'Halloran, a graduate of Red Bank Catholic who has been ministering on the streets of New Orleans for more than 40 years, and Sister Eileen Sullivan, principal of Xavier Prep School. The event was to thank the people, many themselves without basic necessities, who have



Once the plane landed, the team had to spring into action, since they had a show that very afternoon with NJ101.5 radio personality Big Joe Henry at the Marriott for the St. Michael's School for Disabled Children and one that evening at Loew's Hotel for Coast Guard and FEMA workers. Big Joe and the Rock & Roll Music Fund had also journeyed to the Gulf area carrying over 60,000 toys. On Tuesday, their appearance at an event planned by Joe Henry in Baton Rouge was canceled because the venue could not accommodate a group as large as Holiday Express. However, this turned out to be an opportunity for Holiday Express members to get an "up close and personal" look at the 9th Ward, the part of New Orleans hardest hit by Katrina. According to Tim, the bus ride through the area put the rest of the trip in perspective. "It's safe to say that no one expected the extent of the devastation they were about to witness. More than one person had the same thought: Hiroshima."

helped Father John and Sister Eileen assist local residents.



On the final day of the tour, Holiday Express traveled to Pass Christian, Mississippi, once an upscale waterfront community that is now known as "ground zero" to those still there. On the drive there, the landscape became increasingly surreal, Tim recalled, with houses blown off their foundations, shrimp boats miles away from water, cars on rooftops and in trees, and entire towns wiped out.



According to sax player Rick Brunermer, "The show was outside, and we could see a lot of wreckage from where we played. About a hundred yards in front of us were the remains of a large older house, and beside the debris was a small pop tent with two cots inside. The former house residents have been living like that for four months." A rhinestone-decorated comb on the ground outside a destroyed home grabbed the attention of singer Layonne Holmes. "It made me think how these people have lost every little thing." Singer Alan Grant recounted how he met a grandmother of six at the Pass Christian show who said, "This is the first time in months that I've seen my grandkids dancing and laughing...come to think of it, me too."

Meanwhile, the general volunteers swooped upon Sam's Club, where a membership had been arranged before the trip, to buy needed refreshments and raffle items for the events and snacks for the travels between locations. Determining how much to purchase for each event proved challenging. Peter DeMarco explained, "We were told about 350 people would be at the Lake Charles event on Tuesday night, but about 700 people actually showed up. We ran out of everything!"

The last show was a rousing conclusion to the tour. The performance at the Naval Construction Battalion Center in Gulfport for more than 400 men and women from all branches of the military took place in a theater that had its stage swept away by the storm. According to Peter, "It was incredible...the cheering, the clapping, the participation. It was like a Bob Hope USO Christmas show." Rick agreed, adding, "I've never seen such a proud, enthusiastic, patriotic and fired-up group of young people."



The turnout was small on Wednesday at Woldenberg Park, where Holiday Express performed a daytime concert in the shadow of the cruise ships being used to house municipal workers who lost their homes. It was a grim reminder that tourists and passerby were a thing of the past and the only people still there were the ones working. That night, Holiday Express provided the



experience for me. I knew the same would happen from the Gulf trip, and it did."

"The people there are a testament to the human spirit," reflected Layonne. "You can see they are tired – sick and tired – but they are still pushing forward and looking ahead."

Bass player Gerry Carboy was stunned by the obstacles that area residents continue to face. "FEMA has advised people that they cannot rebuild unless they put their houses on pilings, which costs more than the property and house together. And insurance will only pay for the structure of the house. Plus, those that have structures can't get electricity turned on until they pay \$450 for a permit, then another \$500 to have an electrical engineer make sure everything in their home is okay." He added that the people are losing hope and feel somewhat abandoned by their country.

Maureen pointed out that one of the best things about the shows was that they allowed people to step away from the reality of their situations for two hours and "...find some glimmer in the message of hope that Christmas brings."

"It was a good place to be," Rick said. "Many folks I talked to just couldn't believe a bunch of musicians from Jersey would travel all the way down there for no money just to bring some cheer. They were very grateful."

No one will ever know the true impact Holiday Express made on the lives they touched in the Gulf. However, one thing is certain: The people of the Gulf, with their courage and tenacity, had a huge impact on Holiday Express.



No one will ever know
the true impact
Holiday Express
made on the lives they
touched in the Gulf.
However, one thing
is certain:
The people of the Gulf,
with their courage and
tenacity, had a
huge impact on
Holiday Express.

The group headed home on Friday, with many having to perform paid gigs with their own bands in New Jersey that same night. The group had put on seven shows in just four days in locations spanning nearly 400 miles. Though exhausted from the physical demands and the emotional intensity of the trip, the weary travelers felt it was one of the most meaningful experiences of their lives.

Maureen Staub said, "I was fortunate to have gone on the Columbine trip, which was a life-changing



Gulf Schedule At-a-Glance

Monday, December 12, Louisiana

Afternoon

Joined Big Joe Henry at a performance for St. Michael's School for Disabled Children at the New Orleans Marriott Hotel

Evening

Show for Coast Guard and FEMA workers at the Loew's Hotel

Tuesday, December 13, Louisiana

Daytime

Bus tour of 9th Ward, New Orleans

Evening

Show for displaced families, Lake Charles

Wednesday, December 14, Louisiana

Afternoon

Noon concert at Woldenberg Park in New Orleans

Evening

Event coordinated by Father John O'Halloran and Sister Eileen Sullivan, principal of Xavier Prep School, for area residents who have lent a hand to others

Thursday, December 15, Mississippi

Afternoon

Concert near the waterfront in Pass Christian, Mississippi for residents and recovery workers

Evening

Event at Naval Construction Battalion Center in Gulfport for members of all four military branches.

The Gulf Contingent

The volunteers who hit the road with Holiday Express* are listed below:

General Volunteers: Lynne Broza, Ron Breuer, Peter DeMarco, Sherry Henderson, Scott Longfield, Jack Readie, Maureen Staub

Sound: GMS Sound, Tampa Florida, under the direction of Jack Koza, JK Audio

Band

Horns: Rick Brunermer, Joe Grillo, Tom Makoviecki, Ed Mendez, Jerry Pashin

Guitars: Rob Dye, Ralph Notaro

Bass: Gerry Carboy

Keyboard: Tim McLoone

Drums: Bob Boyd

Singers: Amy Broza, Gladys Bryant, Hollis Cooper, Karen Credle, Mary D'Arcy, Valerie Dowd, Alan Grant, Layonne Holmes, Mark Murphy, Scott Paden

Additional Guests: Teri Bibb and Karen Culliver (Like Mary D'Arcy, they played the lead role of Christine in *Phantom of the Opera* on Broadway); Ilene Kristen (soap opera actress and singer)

*Singers Pat Guadagno and Pat Joyce were traveling with Big Joe Henry from NJ101.5 radio and performed with Holiday Express for the first couple of shows.

Everyone went to great lengths to make the Gulf trip a success. Donna Edington (who stayed behind to help with the home-front shows) gathered songbooks and character costumes for the traveling team, Ron Bruer handled travel arrangements, Maureen Staub arranged for vans, Alan Grant got an NBC-affiliate to promote the tour and Peter DeMarco went on a wild search (and found) a pedal to replace one that did not fit Tim's piano. These are just a few of the COUNTLESS examples of how the Holiday Express troupe went the extra mile.

Banding Together on the Homefront



While the merry band of troubadours ventured into the Gulf, there were those on the home front determined to make sure that the full Holiday Express experience was brought to every venue. During that week they dug a little deeper and found an even greater volunteer spirit – personally, and as a group – and they made the organization as a whole stronger than ever – Volunteer and Trustee Jim Celestino details the week's events.

THIS was a week that meant a great deal to all of us who were lucky enough to be a part of it.

To all the volunteers who gave of their time to make

this week special for our guests, our heartfelt thanks go out to you.

Monday, December 12 **University Behavioral Health** **Event Manager – Maureen McCrink**

This is always one of our favorite events. I remember having concerns; not only was it our first event while the band was in the Gulf, but while working with Jeanne Westendorf and Joe Petillo, we discovered there were no singers or players available for that day. Oh well, we always say it will be fine. The bus headed up to New Brunswick with a small, but enthusiastic crew. I believe Holiday Express is a “charmed” organization, and no matter how it looks in the early stages, the event always comes shining through.

When we arrived, the second floor was buzzing. Maureen had things well underway as the guests made their way into the room. Vance had driven up to cover keyboard and we ended up with a large group of singers (rookies and veterans), full horn section, and a solid rhythm section. The show was off and running. Vocalists jumped in, working songs they had never performed before. The guests at University Behavioral are loving, kind, appreciative, and a lot of fun. UBH's vocal group performed a song to Holiday Express. Then we all joined in for *Jingle Bell Rock* as a UBH Nation!

Just when we thought the afternoon couldn't get any better, guest Theresa wanted to sing. She didn't choose just any song, she chose *One Little Christmas Tree*. Vance started the intro and, needless to say, Theresa hit it out of the park! She was stunning. The band and the guests went wild. There was only one thing left to do. Theresa took us out on *Love Train*. I can remember thinking as the train of people steamed its way through the building, “If this is our toughest event, we are in for a hell of a week.”

Tuesday, December 13, 2005 – **Woodbridge Developmental Center** **Event Managers – Nancy Sabino and Mike Sodano**

This event, held in The Knights of Columbus, Woodbridge, was a great improvement over the first year when WDC was not familiar with Holiday Express and what we do. This year had a warm holiday feel, and a much larger area for guests. Earlier in the day, Jeanne, Joe and I had discussed band and vocal availability for the event. Again, it looked like it would be a small group. Upon arrival, we found Nancy and Mike, always in control and always thinking about our “peeps” first and foremost. We found a large group of vocalists, rhythm section, and 5-piece horn section – but no keyboards. As we tried to figure out the best way to open without a keyboard, the answer walked right up to us. Once again, another guest named Deidre solved our problem. Deidre wanted to sing the very first song of the evening. What a great idea! Deidre offered to sing *Jingle Bell Rock*, and it seemed the perfect opening. Plus guitar intro. Perfect!

From the first number, the show rolled on and the guests were very enthusiastic and wanted to be part of the evening. Patients on gurneys were moving to the music to the best of their ability. Byron recalls a gentleman in a Cab Calloway suit and hat dancing in front of us all evening. He had his own patented smooth moves and was definitely working the room. Mike Schwartz remembers Rich Spahr working with a guest for 30 minutes trying to get her bed into the building. The bed was too wide for the entrance and she really did not want to be left out. Rich wouldn't let that happen, and eventually succeeded in getting her in. You can imagine how happy she was! Many of our guests wanted to sing with us. Tim always taught us the event is about our guests, so why not? It seems the favorite song of the evening was *Rudolph*. I think we played that song 12 times (in a row) and everyone loved it. Deidre even came back and dedicated a song to her boyfriend, Bob. She had him sit in a chair directly in front of her while she performed, what song you may ask? *Rudolph*! There were Great Disco Santas as well. It was a beautiful night for our guests; and, as always, for us.



**Wednesday, December 14, 2005 Daytime
Harbor School
Event Manager – Jeff Fraller**

By Wednesday, it was clear every volunteer/musician/vocalist within 20 miles of the scheduled event would drop everything to sure they were there. I think Kathy Severini made arrangements to attend every single event that week. The turnout this week was strong from all corners. Vocal, rhythm, horn; and, of course, Bob the sound man was everywhere. No need to call to see who would show up. After the turnout of the first two events, we were confident that the stage would be full no matter where we were. It really was a wonderful feeling. There was a great deal of excitement and it seemed that we all felt it.

Marilee began her teaching career at Harbor School, so I was familiar with the venue. And, if you know anything about Jeff Fraller, you know you don't have to think twice about the guests receiving everything they need. However, I'm not sure anyone was prepared for how tremendous this event would be. Speaking for myself, it was the high watermark for us that week. Maybe it was because it was the first time Holiday Express visited this event. Maybe it was because the kids were so very enthusiastic, fun-loving, and simply beautiful. They were on their feet, very close to the band, dancing and singing. Maybe it was just Wednesday, middle of the week; and as volunteers, we felt we were hitting our stride. We all believed in each other and our mission. We knew we wouldn't let our guests down – or the other half of our organization as they were working through some tough times in the Gulf. It was important to each of us to hold down the fort.

Could it have been that Jeff seemed to have hundreds of raffles and prizes? It felt like every time we looked up, Donna was waving the ticket basket to give away more goodies. I have a feeling it was a convergence of all these things both in, and out, of our control. It was a Holiday Express Moment. The afternoon passed in a flash. Harbor School's Musical Director invited us back to see their school variety show. The act that caught our attention was five students performing the "Disco Santas" to our very own sound track! How about that?

**Wednesday, December 14, 2005 – Evening
Special Olympics of Staten Island
Event Manager – Jane Denny**

SOSI is an event we visit every other year. If you've been to any Special Olympics Event, you know how much fun they are. Our guests are always so happy to see us. For the most part, they want "up-tempo" music, and dance from start to finish.

This was also the first time all week that the volunteers traveled on the bus. It gave us an opportunity to "hang out" together, catch up, and relax. Fred delivered us safely; and, as you know, *there's nothing like the Holiday Express bus trips.*

The event takes place on a pier in Staten Island. Even when you make it inside, there is a 200-yard walk to the area where the party takes place. Jane mobilized all of us and before we knew it, the party was set up and we were waiting for our guests. There were approximately 400 guests and it was a blast. This was another event without a keyboard player, so it became a "Lynyrd Skynyrd Guitar Christmas Spectacular." Roger Taylor and Steve Chrepta joined us

this evening. A great time was had by all. The image that sticks in my mind is of Maureen McCrink standing on top of a road case on wheels. She was performing *Do You Hear What I Hear* while being rolled around the room. She reminded me of a combination of Cleopatra being carried into Rome, and the Pied Piper! Every guest was trailing her, trying to keep up with her. Maureen had our guests adding sound effects like the sounds of little lambs. They all waved their hands in the air and really got into the whole act. It was a highlight for all of us. Only Maureen can pull that off.

**Thursday, December 15, 2005
Lake View School (CP Edison)
Event Manager – Rich Murphy**

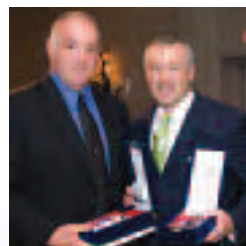
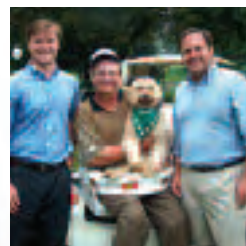
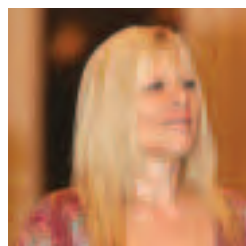
Lake View School is another special place. It is a school for children with Cerebral Palsy. Because of the size of the room, the band performs two 45-minute shows. This event is very emotional. Whenever we perform at Lake View (CP Edison), I can't even look at Mike Guadagno. He is in tears by the second tune. This day was no different except that Frank Calandrino, our drummer, was in tears while we were setting up. Unfortunately, our event manager Rich Murphy, who is very attached to this event, was called away to an emergency at work and could not make the show. It was a tough break for him as he has been with this event since day one and it is close to his heart.

Lakeview is one of the few shows which is all children, and we choose the music accordingly. Their favorite sing-alongs are *That's What Christmas Means to Me*, *Feliz Navidad*, and of course, *Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer*. They truly love the music, and the time we spend with them. It's tough to stay in the moment because of the always-impending tears. There was one young lady that sang *Silent Night* with Maureen, and then by herself as a solo. She was right in tune and sounded like an angel. As I looked around, everyone in the band, as well as all of the teachers, were in tears. It was such a touching moment – the kind of moment you only find in Holiday Express.

**Thursday, December 15, 2005
Association of Retarded Citizens
Event Manager – Jeannie Cosentino**

This evening we were back at Harbor School for ARC, the Association for Retarded Citizens. This evening was to be their annual Christmas Ball. The gym was beautifully decorated. Jeannie was working hard to make sure the evening was a classic Holiday Express event. Of course, she pulled it off. The crowd was revved up, ready to dance. In fact, most of them were dancing up on stage with the band. It was really wild. There was a great spirit all night. The guests at ARC, not unlike Monmouth VOTEC, really love and care about each other. It is clear to see and it really warms your heart. The evening was one big dance party. The Disco Santas were the best of the week. The selected disco dancers were so excited, it was almost impossible to keep them out of "Discoville" until Donna was ready for them. The show ended with a few guest singers. The last song of the evening was performed by a young man who sang *The Most Wonderful Time of the Year* complete with modulation. He had us in stitches. What a way to end the week.

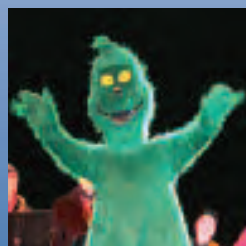
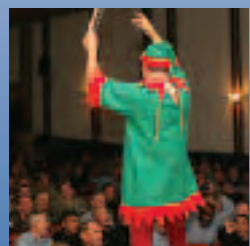
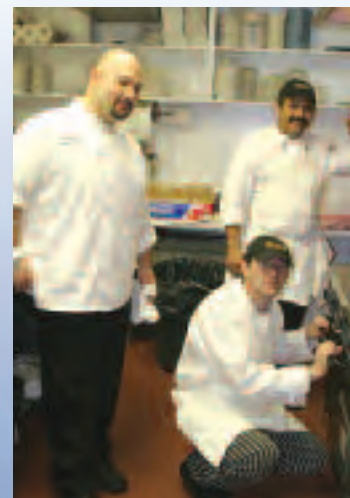




It is the mission of Holiday Express to deliver music, food, gifts, financial support and friendship to those with the greatest need for the gift of human kindness during the holiday season and throughout the year.



SEASON 2005





News from the Warehouse Elves

Just when you thought things couldn't get any better...

For starters, the Warehouse Kingdom of Elves seemed to expand this year.

We got an Elf Boss, none other than HolEx veteran, Don Pignataro. He seemed to always be in the warehouse and handled all the deliveries, all the pallet moving, truck loading, and box moving duties. His presence made a huge difference in Elfland efficiency.

The Morning Elves, a group of die-hard behind-the-scenes workers, deserve a lot of thanks. They took their gift giving tasks very seriously and worked plenty of overtime.

The Junior Volunteer numbers seems to expand every year. We topped out at 64 kids several days this season and averaged between 25 and 50 daily. With so many helpers we developed "stations" where gift bag items could be prepackaged.

There were an abundance of younger children (Jr., Jr. Volunteers) who really wanted to contribute and something good came from this...several hundred gift bags this year contained genuine HolEx cards handmade by real elves. Our favorite was:

**The World is Grate
And You're Grate too**

We were, as always, delighted to have our college kids back...

It was good (Grate even) to have so much help because here are the numbers:

7,984 men's gift bags
4,278 women's gift bags
1,633 children's gift bags
for a grand total of 15,215

*Thanks for a GRATE Season;
support your local Elf!*



Pass The Bag – An *Original* Holiday Express Parody

by *Trudy Parton*

Sung to the tune of *Jingle Bells*

(Briskly)

T'was just ten years ago
Joan thought she'd volunteer
Give a bit of time
Spreading out some cheer.
From trailer to ware house
Merilee by her side
Concerts, bags and goodies bright
Smiles at Christmas tide

Pass the bag, Pass the bag.
Why'd they volunteer?
Did they know how this would grow?
10,000 bags a year!

*(Now we jump to the months of
October and November...)*

An hour or two ago
We thought we'd volunteer
Give a little time
Helping spread some cheer.
We found the warehouse full
Guess you know the rest
Filling bags with goodies bright
For Holiday Express.

Pass the bag. Pass the bag
Why'd we volunteer?
Only five thousand more
Then we'll have a beer

(Not quite so brisk)

A day or two ago
We thought we'd volunteer
It makes you feel real good
At least that's what we hear.
Filling lots of bags
Carting them next door
Even loading up a truck
Muscles getting sore.

Pass the bag. Pass the bag.
Why'd we volunteer?
Only two thousand more
'Til we're out of here.

(Slowly)

A week or two ago
We thought we'd volunteer
There're still more bags to pack
And Christmas' almost here
Our bodies are a wreck.
Na-ils? We have none!
Who has time to cook or shop?
We haven't yet begun.

Pass the bag. Pass the bag.
Why'd we volunteer?
Christmas Eve is almost nigh
We won't be done we fear.

(Very slowly)

A month or two ago
We thought we'd volunteer
Now it's Christmas Eve
And we are all still here.

(Briskly)

WAIT! What's that you say?
The packing's finally through?
Our mission is complete!
Happy holidays to you!

Pass the bag. Pass the bag.
We're glad we volunteer.
No more bags are left to do.
We'll all be back next year!

GIVING PARTNERS 2005

Number of organizations with wish lists: 52

Total number of giving partners: 30

New giving partners: 10

GIFTS GIVEN

Checks
Salary for a Fitness Instructor
Sewing Machine, Commercial
Refrigerator, Dishwasher
3 Microwaves
15 Bedside Boomboxes
2 Digital Cameras, 20 Alarm Clocks
Ipod and Speakers
3 TVs, 2 DVD Players
DJ Equipment, Software, Printer, Fax
Playstation 2 with Control Center

Home Depot, Walmart, Shoprite and
Barnes & Noble Gift Cards
6 Rocking Chairs, Patio Glider
Backpacks, School Supplies
Blankets, Towels, Robes and Gowns
Coats, Underwear, Socks
3 Bicycles, 6 Softball Bats, 6 Basketballs
24 Softballs, Duffel Bags
Specialized Baby Thermometers
Kitchen Supplies, Tablespoons
Office Supplies

Victoria's Essay

"Life isn't about the breaths you take
but the moments that take your breath away"

-Anonymous

As *Holiday Express* nears its 15th anniversary, the youngest members are growing up, branching out and carrying the spirit of volunteerism forward. Victoria Villee volunteered as part of the Kathryn Barnett Dance troupe, who travel to various events and bring performances that would make the Rockettes proud. She's done this alongside her mother Pat, who also volunteers with *Holiday Express*.

Victoria attended Rumson-Fair Haven High School, where she was the president of the Health Club and senior mentor for three freshman special education students from the Forrestdale School. She also coordinated blood drives and a holiday party for Head Start children and last summer volunteered with the Horizon program at Rumson Country Day School.

Victoria credits *Holiday Express* for inspiring her desire to major in Special Education, transforming her love of working with children into her future career plans. She wrote the following Essay as part of her application to Salve Regina University, where she now carries a double major in Special Education and Elementary Education. Her community service continues as she volunteers with the local Special Olympics. Her Essay speaks to the legacy of this organization and the importance of scholarship to foster interest in education and service.

I feel my life has been blessed with many breath-taking moments thanks to my involvement with dance. I started dancing when I was just three. Over the past fifteen years I have been involved in countless competitions and recitals. The best part is having the opportunity to share my passion

with others off stage. Being able to make someone's day brighter is an experience that I cannot forget.

When I was seven-years-old, my dance troupe became involved with *Holiday Express*, whose mission is to give friendship and love to the mentally disabled, those living with illnesses such as cancer and AIDS, the homeless, the isolated elderly and others in need of the gift of human kindness.

One of the most memorable shows I participated in was held in a local school gym and hundreds of mentally and physically challenged children were bused in. When they came off the bus their faces lit up with excitement. I spotted one girl staring at me in my handmade red and white fur-trimmed costume. She made her way over to me and asked if Santa was coming to see her. I said, "Jamie, Santa will be here very soon." She looked excited because I called her by name, but I have to give credit to the nametag she was wearing. A few minutes later our dance troupe assembled in front of the room and performed the dance, *Sleigh Ride*. Jamie came out on the dance floor while we were performing and just stood there and bounced up and down with the music. Then the song *Santa Claus is Coming to Town* started blasting. She came back up to me and said "I hear Santa on the roof." I couldn't help but smile.

Jamie looked so familiar but I couldn't figure out why. When she took my hand and looked into my eyes, it was then I realized we were in the same homeroom when we were younger. She was always filled with such life even though she couldn't express herself so well because she had some speech problems. But her smile was one that could not be forgotten,



that's how she communicated with everyone. With all her heart she tried to sing the *Twelve Days of Christmas* with all of us. The saying "you better not quit your day job" pertains to my singing; I was made to be a dancer not a singer. I was completely off key and tone deaf, but Jamie didn't care, she never left my side that entire night. With a laugh, Jamie and I agreed that we both were much better dancers than singers. Even though she didn't have the technical training like our troupe did, her movements were just as beautiful. She was happy to have someone to celebrate her night with. I will never forget the cheerful smile our dance put on her face that night. She in turn brought butterflies to my stomach and a glow to my face; I was so overcome with joy because she was happy.

Over that past ten years I have continued to do these shows throughout the holiday season. I have seen Jamie several times since that night and she stills remembers me as Santa's helper in my red and white fur-trimmed costume. After that moment with Jamie it was clear to me that it is not about the surroundings in which you are dancing; we could be at Rockefeller Center under the famous Christmas tree or dancing in a muddy field in the middle of nowhere. The place doesn't matter; it is about sharing a gift with others. I have given my life, love, and spirit to making others smile because in return I get a smile, a gift that is priceless and takes my breath away.



2005 Holiday Express Events

April 16



Sgt. Pat's 5K Race and the Holiday Express 2 Mile Fitness Walk, honoring slain officer Pat King, husband of our volunteer Maureen King. Funds raised from the race contribute to the Pat King Scholarship Fund and fitness walk funds are donated to Holiday Express.

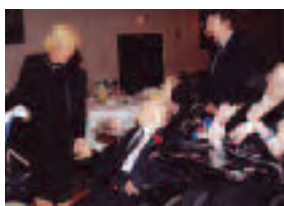
May 26



Matheny Prom – Matheny Medical and Teaching Center is a residential facility specializing in the care of children and adults with cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, spina bifida and Lesch-Nyhan disease. Our volunteers caravanned up to the Skylands in Randolph, NJ, to provide their loving care to Matheny's special folks. We helped them get dressed, applied make-up, decorated, served

food and rocked the house with a full band, all while wearing tuxes and gowns!

"What I learned was that they want what we want. To be able to look our best, feel good, go out and have a good time with our friends. Some of the girls were fussing with how we did their styling because there was a certain fellow they wanted to see at the prom. Despite their wheelchairs, uncontrolled motion, difficulty speaking, they are like us. And we got to see them in their prime." – Maureen Staub



June 30

Holiday Express Scholarships awarded. Currently, Holiday Express donates \$65,000 per year in scholarships and awards to 13 recipients.

One of our 2005 awardees, Shaqita Fogg, 2005 winner of the Andrew Spencer Award, is a graduate of the Asbury Park Charter School where she was a member of the National Honor Society. Shaqita attends North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University and is majoring in Chemical Engineering.

"The scholarship will be a huge help to my college expenses. When I learned that I won the award, a huge burden was lifted off of my shoulders...once again, I would like to say Thank You so much for all your help." – Shaqita Fogg.

July 16



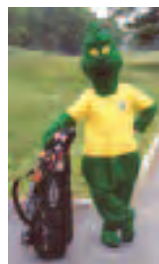
First Ever Express Makeover St. Mark's Kitchen, Keansburg, daily serves meals, delivers meals to shut-ins and serves as an emergency food pantry. This 5-month renovation demonstrated the dedication and determination of volunteers from Holiday Express, St. Mark's, local businesses, and the community, along with the support of Big Joe Henry and NJ101.5 FM. Renovations included a 1200-sq.ft. pantry, a new office and a handicap access ramp.



July 30

St. John's, Newark, was the scene of a good old-fashioned Summer BBQ. Holiday Express volunteers grilled and served more than 450 homeless under the hot sun and construction dust.

August 8



Third Annual Golf Classic at the beautiful, yet challenging, Manasquan River Golf Club in Brielle raised over \$40K for the Scholarship Fund. In addition to the entertainment, food and prizes, the day highlighted a special performance by the inspirational Dennis Walters. Dennis, a Jersey Shore native, who caddied and played many Monmouth County courses, was paralyzed from the waist down in a golf cart accident at the age of 24. He now travels across the country and overseas demonstrating his remarkable shot making skills. **The 2006 Golf event takes place on July 24th.**



October 13

Rock and a Heart Place, the documentary of the Holiday Express story, premiered at the Red Bank International Film Festival. It later won the 'Best Feature Documentary' award at the 2006 Garden State Film Festival. Congratulations to volunteers Mike Sodano and Nancy Sabino and their company, Eventure, Inc.!



October 21

Sickles Market, Little Silver, hosted their third 'Pie in the Sky' two-day event to benefit Holiday Express. A wine and cheese reception and delicious apple pie baking contest, by both professionals and amateurs, were among the event highlights. The 2005 event raised over \$44K for Holiday Express.



November 6

1st Annual Scotch Tasting and Fundraiser takes place at McLoone's Riverside Dining.

November 18

The Ocean Place Hotel hosted the 9th Annual Holiday Express Dinner Dance. In addition to the rocking band performance, the live and silent auction items and the raffle prizes, the Choir from Matheny Medical and Teaching Center provided musical talent that left no dry eyes in the room.



And Highlights

November 18 through December 24: 55 Events

48 Events in New Jersey, New York, Philadelphia

Songs sung over 1,800 times. 200,000 items handled in the warehouse. Over 15,000 gift bags assembled. Hundreds of adult and junior volunteers counting, carrying, loading, singing, dancing, painting and sometimes crying.

The Annual Dinner Dance began the event season and the feeding of 800 homeless under the tent at St. John's on Christmas Eve, ended the season. We welcomed Santa at the Red Bank Tree Lighting, played the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, participated in the 101.5 Big Joe Henry Radio Show, traveled to the Gulf region bringing our mission to those impacted by the hurricanes and entertained a loyal following at the Count Basie Theater.

7 Events in The Gulf Coast

While volunteers carried out events planned at home, a troupe of volunteers traveled to Louisiana and Mississippi during the second week of December.

November 28

North Jersey Developmental Center – 'Families of some of the residents were in attendance, which was a pleasant surprise and made the night even more heart warming to see many generations enjoying the activities with their loved ones...everyone had a blast and no one left without a smile. They said, 'See you next year!' as we waved goodnight.'

– Nancy Sabino & Mike Sodano, Event Managers

December 1



Ocean County Mental Health – 'With the Windmill providing the food and St. Luke's providing space to seat almost 300, how could we miss? An awesome band and a full compliment of energized volunteers made this event a great success.

Surprisingly though, the highlight of the day was not the band or the volunteers. It was the act of one OCMH secretary – she called one afternoon

and literally whispered the names of three women who were in desperate need – not for themselves but for their children.

Enter the *raffle elves*! Margaret and Ann wrapped packages for a homeless single mother of a 14-year-old girl; the special, unemployed mother of a 7-year-old; and the disabled grandmother of a 2-year-old. Funny how each won a raffle gift fit for their children. The 7-year-old's mother sat through the rest of the show as tears streamed down her face. The grandmother could not stop shaking her head in wonder. Thanks to the raffle elves and even greater thanks to the secretary who had the gumption [I cannot spell chutzpa!] to whisper these stories to Holiday Express. How lucky are we?'

– Kim Guadagno, Event Manager



December 5

Greenbrook Development Center – 'The room may have been small but the army of volunteers who stepped up to bring Christmas to people who seemed tucked away in their own worlds made the party seem big. We danced and sang with newcomers Bitsey, Jean, Cathy and Joe. Vance and Rick worked as if they had been working together for years. The Grinch had the band in tears...Donna was heard already discussing next year's show. A good time was had by all.'

– Kim Guadagno, Event Manager

Many 'things' occur throughout the year,
they all have one thing in common, People.

December 7

Our first-ever performance at New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) in Newark, NJ featured Emmy Award-winner Steve Aduato, Big Joe Henry and The Mahoney Brothers special shade of 'Blue Christmas'.



December 10

Trinitas-Kinship Connection – 'You all really made me lift my spirits high. Being that my husband and I had like no Christmas spirit at all, you guys made us feel special – my husband and I had nothing to give our kids, but you have gave us the best present of all – your love and holiday spirit.'

December 13

Woodbridge Development Center – 'These are our 'peeps' as Jim Celestino likes to say. And they were ready for us, in a new venue – a beautiful Knights of Columbus Hall with chandeliers, a working bar and over 100 residents and staff. They sang along, clapped, danced, rocked, swayed, howled (with delight, I hope) ate cake and drank soda and love-trained until it was time to venture back out in the cold to the buses waiting to take them 'home.' I watched the one woman who had the most difficult load in (and out) during the event. Unable to sit upright, she remained horizontal in her wheeled bed/chair, her tiny body bent into into the most unbelievable of ways. She was shaking her head and laughing most of the night. It's no surprise that they wanted her in, no matter what.'

– Nancy Sabino

December 15



'As an audience member at your wonderful performance in Pass Christian, MS, I had to write to tell you what a great pick-me-up it was for us to have you there. I know it was a small crowd, since there really are not that many people able to live in our town right now, but please know that your presence was so appreciated. Such talented folks, and what a great way to help people. Thanks again from 'The Pass' – my kids and I won't forget you!'

December 24

St. John's Soup Kitchen – 'How do I begin to thank you and your team for the gift of Christmas Eve? There was so much love in that

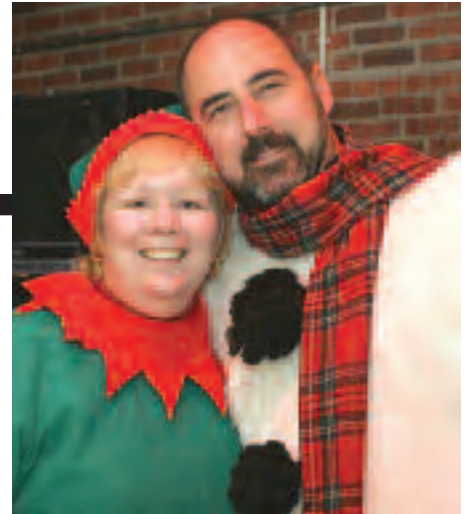
tent and on that truck with the gift bags. I was deeply touched that you and your friends listened to God's call to serve and you found a monumental way to do it.

Thank you for the good example and generous love. Peace.' – Reverend Monsignor J. Neil Mahoney



Helping Holiday Express Deliver VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Unity behind the mission to serve is just one of the characteristics of Holiday Express volunteers. This spirit flows throughout the organization, among family members and friends, and passes from parent to child.



Jeanne and Tony Cosentino

Jeanne Cosentino joined Holiday Express in 1995 and has had a hand in most of the event activities. "I've dabbled in food service, characters, crafts, and face painting." A Personal Lines Manager at E&K Agency for 17 years, Jeanne is also married to another of Holiday Express's finest, Tony, for 26 years. The couple have two children – TJ, 23, a graduate of Virginia Tech now working at Ft. Monmouth, and Tracy, 19, a sophomore at the University of Delaware.



Jeanne came to Holiday Express via the Celestino family. "I remember Jimmy and I sitting in his car with our sons, TJ and Jimmy, in the commuter parking lot at Exit 109, getting up the nerve to get on the bus," she said, "We didn't know anyone else, and just offered to help. That first show was for pediatric cancer patients at Robert Wood Johnson – we were hooked from the start!"

It's good fun, but not without sad realities and obstacles to be overcome. "The challenges are many, ranging from smiling when your heart is breaking, to balancing your time between work, family and Holiday Express. I try and do about half the events – that job thing always seems to get in the way! People I meet are always surprised at the time involved. To me, the Holiday Express season is priority. Just like most of us at the Jersey Shore

could not imagine not being at the beach in July and August, I can't imagine not being on the bus in December!"

When asked for her most memorable experience, Jeanne replied, "I have the most amazing snapshots in my mind of so many different people I've met over the years! Some moments are sad – the little boy at Blythedale who closed his eyes,

held on to his wheel chair and sang *I Believe I Can Fly* along with Dee. Some moments still make me smile – the Special Olympics athlete who was convinced the Santa on stage was not the *real* Santa – but then assured me that it had been the *real* Grinch!"

At the end of the day (and the season), there are those reflections that make it all worthwhile. "Holiday Express has given me and my family the opportunity to give back to the community. After my first season, I went to the Tradewinds and Tim ended the show with a John Lennon song, and I cried. When I hear the line 'and so this is Christmas, and what have you done', I feel blessed that I've had the opportunity to do something worthwhile to help those less fortunate. Holiday Express just feels good inside!"



Enter spouse Tony Cosentino, who started in 1998 and refers to himself as “a utility player, sometimes playing various well known furry special guests – some happy, some green and mean.” When not in costume, Tony said he sometimes imitates the job of Program Director Donna Edington when there are two or more events on the same day. Then there are the times when he’s “just doing the heavy lifting or standing guard at the front of the stage protecting the beautiful woman of Holiday Express.” It’s obvious that Tony offers his talents wherever they’re needed, charm included.

A graduate of Shore Regional High School (1977), Tony graduated from Teterboro School of Aeronautics with an aircraft technician’s license in 1979. He is currently Assistant Service Manager for Ray Catena Infiniti in Edison, New Jersey.



“I got involved with Holiday Express. through my wife. She said to me, ‘You should come with me, I think you would like it.’ The rest is history!” Like Jeanne, Tony confided that the most challenging part of volunteering is blending work into the schedule. “The other challenge I have is keeping up with Jeanne’s relentless production of craft material. You think Santa’s workshop is busy, you should see Jeanne’s Craft Central.”

Most memorable event? “That is a tough question,” he said. “The first show I ever did was Philadelphia Children’s Hospital. I drove down with Frank in the Avis truck, so I was able to get an idea what to do from him. But when I got there Donna said “Hey, you look like a good Frosty, so she put me in the Frosty costume and away we went to the wards. We got to one little girl’s room, and when Frosty walked in her face lit up, and her

parents could not get enough pictures of her with Frosty. So here I am melting – not only from the heat inside the costume – but from her little face; and I am trying not to knock any of the IV tubes out of her arms. The parents got many photos of her with Frosty and I got one photo of her – burned forever my mind.”



Tony continued,

“The other event that is imprinted in my mind was our trip to Columbine. The events of that week – all of the people we met, and the stories we heard at our dinner with the families – will be with me forever as well as they will be with you.”

While many of us, as volunteers, experience the same joys and sorrows, there is always that special something that is yours alone. “I would like to thank my wife Jeanne for convincing me to go with her that day long ago. I have gained the ability to see people not by the clothes they are wearing, or the places they live, but just as people. People who may not have been as lucky as I am – and for that I am forever grateful.”

Thank You, Cosentino Family



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



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



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

Save this date!

Your generous support of this event allows Holiday Express to continue our Scholarship and other special programs.

2006 HOLIDAY Express GOLF CLASSIC

July 24, 2006
Manasquan River Golf Club

One of New Jersey's top golf courses
Great Food
Great Prizes
Entertainment
A day not to be missed!

Call for information:
732-544-8010
or email us at:
golf@holidayexpress.org

Full information available at www.holidayexpress.org

An Even Greater Gift Tip

Corporations are increasingly instructing their employees that 'company policy' is *not* to accept gifts during the holidays; and, if sent, all gifts are to be returned.

One gift that continues to be accepted even in the wake of this restriction is a donation to Holiday Express. It is a novel, creative and meaningful way to thank clients, friends or family.

Accompany a simple letter or card indicating the donation made on their behalf with a copy of the Holiday Express mission statement and website address and you will pique interest, allow for further in-depth investigation and spread the message of hope.

Send Holiday Express the list of people to be credited, along with your donation, and Director of Operations, Amy Robinson, will send an individual 'thank you' note to each.

This is a small 'win-win-win' idea that can be used any time someone deserves to be thanked for their efforts. It supports Holiday Express, appreciates an individual in a way that causes no breach of ethics and expands the understanding of the organization into the community.



Save the Date:
Holiday Express Special Events

2006

Golf Classic	July 24
St. John's Summer BBQ	July 29
Dinner Dance	November 17
NJPAC	December 7