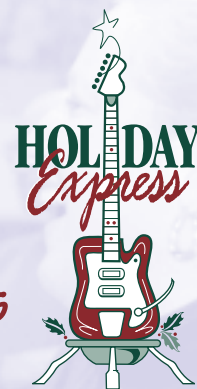


Volunteers *Delivering the Gift of Human Kindness*

Issue 11 Spring 2004



Holiday Express Wraps Up Another Season of Smiles

Picture Clark Kent entering a phone booth and emerging as Superman. That's the way it's been these last ten years for the hundreds of business professionals, students, and homemakers who are transformed in their free time into elves, angels, reindeer, warehouse workers, band members, and event managers as volunteers for Holiday Express.

The super men, women, and teens behind Holiday Express have made each year bigger and better, and the 10th Anniversary was no exception.

The season started in October when Sickles Market in Little Silver held its Annual Wine & Cheese Tasting and Apple Pie Baking Contest to benefit Holiday Express. The event had

some especially sweet outcomes, including volunteer Patty Skinner taking First Place in the amateur baking category. Additionally, the money raised helped to stock the shelves of the new, larger warehouse that Holiday Express occupied in June 2003.

To prepare for the 51 shows, an army of adult and junior volunteers packed 13,000 gift bags with everyday necessities, as well as fun stuff. While the less than glamorous warehouse was the hub of last-minute pre-season planning, the elegant dinner dance – which took many months to organize – provided significant funding to make the 10th Anniversary holiday outreach a reality.

(continued on next page)





A couple of weeks after Holiday Express took to the road for its first client show of the season, the Holiday Express band, the Candle Brothers, and Southside Johnny performed at NJ101.5's live-remote Christmas Extravaganza from Jenkinson's in Point Pleasant, an event that raised money for three children's charities and Holiday Express.

This was followed a week later by the sold-out Count Basie concert in Red Bank and a few days after that by WPLJ's holiday broadcast to benefit Blythedale Care Center in Valhalla, NY. The Holiday Express band left Valhalla, then headed for Asbury Park to take the stage that night for their

first performance at the legendary Convention Hall (which replaced the annual Tradewinds event) and brought out some new faces. (This show will air during the 2004 holiday season.)

Throughout this season, several New Jersey organizations were added to the roster: Hope From Holly Foundation, Lincroft; Ancora Psychiatric Hospital; Millburn Regional Day School; North Jersey Developmental Center of Totowa; and Asbury Park Senior Citizens organization; as well as a renewal of ties with Trinitas Hospital (Kinship Connection) in Elizabeth and Robert Wood Johnson Hospital in New Brunswick.



Perhaps the annual visit to St. John's Soup Kitchen in Newark, attended this year by Governor Jim McGreevey and Senator John Corzine, best summed up the spirit of the Holiday Express experience. Despite the heavy rain and the mud, the smiles under the big tent proved once again that the long hours, hard work, and crazy schedules are always worth the effort.

Thanks to all the volunteers and supporters who helped make these 10th Anniversary memories possible.

It is the mission of Holiday Express to deliver music, food, gifts and friendship 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 during the holiday season and throughout the year.

Board of Directors

Timothy McLoone, President
Amy Broza, Vice President
Ann Robinson, Vice President
Barbara Murphy, Treasurer
Helen Doyle, Secretary
Joan Mercer, Recording Secretary

Holiday Express Communications Group Contributors

John Bollinger, Sonny Felixson, Alan Grant, Delores Holmes, Layonne Holmes, Denise Lang, Joan Mercer, Denise O'Hara, Joe Petillo, Amy Robinson, Nancy Sabino, Mike Sodano, Jill Weiss Graphic Design, Barbara Willis

Special Thanks to Bessie Halsey, HolEx Webmaster
Photos by Scott Longfield and HolEx friends

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

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

HolEx Annex *by John Bollinger*

Though different from the first Holiday Express concert over ten years ago, the audience at the First Annual Holiday Express Fund Raising Jam at The Cutting Room on 24th Street in Manhattan, felt the event brought just as much promise. The concept of the event was a simple one: make a joyful noise (with or without reverb), get people into the spirit of the season; and make some money for our favorite charity.

With the help of Steve Walter and James Rocco, co-owners of The Cutting Room with Law and Order's Chris Noth (who gave us the use of the club for the evening), the audience, at \$20 per person donation, had a great time.

December 18th, on a stage that has featured Sheryl Crow, Kid Rock, Southside Johnny and Jimmy Vivino, we cobbled together a fun way for those who aren't players in the regular Holiday Express bands to share the joy of the season.

HolEx Annex, a working name for this sort of fund raiser, featured singer/songwriter, Kathy Phillips, who has shared bill with Levon Helm, Dickie Betts and Andy Summers; Primitive Soul, fronted by Holiday Express' own Alan Grant; Janice Kollar, the voice of hundreds of national jingles including McDonald's, AT&T and GE; Asbury Park's Ronnie Brandt; Richard Young and Skreech.

We raised about \$600.00 and learned a lot about proceeding with future fundraisers. Anyone who is interested in getting involved in HolEx Annex in the future, feel free to contact me at 732-872-2270 or johnbollinger@comcast.net.

It's not always easy being an elf for Holiday Express, but it certainly is memorable. Here we take a peek inside the mind of an elf, and discover what makes this kind of volunteer so special...

Elf Tales

December 23, 2003 11:30 am

We arrived at Blythedale Children's Hospital about 6:30 this morning for the Scott & Todd WPLJ year-end broadcast. It was freezing out, but just seeing the faces of those beautiful kids again warmed us right up. Again, the hospital staff made us feel welcomed and rolled out the red carpet. The good news was that we saw a lot of familiar faces of kids whom we have come to know and love. Just the way their faces light up when they see us and let us know how glad they are that we came back, makes the exhaustion all worth while. Yeah, like you could stop me from coming back!

The bad news is that they're still here. It's a struggle we have learned to deal with wherever we go. We want to see them again, but on the other hand, we want them to get better and go home. Some, like Maureen, have become part of our family. We stay in touch throughout the year. These special relationships would never have occurred without Holiday Express.

December 23, 2003 11:30 pm

Wow, just look at this place! We just finished another tremendous show – our first time at Convention Hall in Asbury Park. The road crew is packing up now but I just wanted to sit here for a moment and take it all in, so I plopped myself way up in the bleachers and from here I have a great view of the entire hall. You know, looking around it's almost spooky. I can still hear the cheers of the crowd. The show was awesome and the view from up on

Anyway, the show was great – the kids were great – our band kicked butt – and the celebrity guests continue to be '1st Class Acts.' Again, they stayed until the very last kid was wheeled out. It's great to see people of that caliber have such big hearts.

So we are now leaving Blythedale for another year and our bus is in the capable hands of our very own Holiday Express driver, Fred, so I'm going to grab some sleep. We have a big show tonight at Convention Hall, in Asbury Park. What word did I just use...sleep? I remember that! Wasn't that something I did in November? I'm too pumped up right now to sleep, and being on the bus with so many close friends is something I can't pass by. These are some of the moments we carry with us throughout the year. Sleep? I'll do it in January! See you tonight at Convention Hall.

stage was amazing. What a fantastic memory to share with my fellow Holiday Express volunteers. Here, in such an historic place, where some of the greatest performers in entertainment history have stood, we were allowed to give to our family and friends the gift that we so cherish – our gift of music. Many people shower us with praise and adulation, but there are so many others among us that we feel are the special souls. So when we come to places like this, to perform for the public, for many of us this is our way of giving a little something back to those who allow us the privilege of this thing we do. For the families who make unending sacrifices so that we can be away most of December; to the volunteers who make it possible for the musicians to perform; to the thousands of supporters who help Holiday Express "bring the gift of human kindness" – these are the people we are singing to here, tonight.

And it is their voices I hear echoing through this majestic hall. This place has been host to countless wonderful moments in history, but I dare to think that none ever had the spirit like what filled this hall tonight. I'm pretty lucky, you know that? I'm also quite exhausted, so I'm going home. Did someone say "after show party"? OK, I guess I can stop off for a little while!



2003 Holiday Express

Warehouse Stats

Total number of gift bags
packed by the Elves was 12,849

4964 mens

4835 womens

3050 kids/teens

In addition, gift bags and other products
were given to 11 events/agencies not on
the Holiday Express schedule, including
Staten Island Hospice

Number of Junior Volunteers
150/week

Donation Highlights

8,000 fleece gloves and hats from Fownes Bros.

10,000 toothbrush/paste/floss from Colgate

Cartons of art supplies from Rose Art

Socks of every color for men and women
courtesy of Royce Hosiery

30,000 bags of Vitamin C drops from
AH Robbins

10,000 chapstick from AH Robbins

1502 Blankets from Berkshire

1500 washcloths from Martha Stewart

...and boxes of soft, cozy sweatpants showed
up from a mystery donor in Colorado

And, as usual, families, schools, church groups
and small businesses filled in all the gaps with lots
of granola bars, tons of candy and lots of toys

"The spirit of giving was evident everyday and,
we all agree, a wonderful thing to be a part of,"
said Joan Mercer, Gift Coordinator. Thank you
for your support.





THE SPIRIT
OF GIVING WAS
EVIDENT EVERYDAY;
AND, WE ALL AGREE,
A WONDERFUL THING
TO BE A PART OF.

THANK YOU
FOR YOUR SUPPORT.

Joan Mercer, Gift Coordinator



Helping Holiday Express Deliver VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Naturally there are plenty of great stories we can tell about our volunteers, but the greatest are those that come directly from them. This column was intended to be a Volunteer Spotlight all about Sonny Felixson, but instead it's a testament to the selfless and caring people who allow Holiday Express to accomplish so much...

Holiday Express is the most wonderful organization and I am so thankful and proud to be part of it. The people in Holiday Express became my extended family, even though I see them mostly at holiday time. In my volunteering with Holiday Express, and helping others, little do the people know how they help me. It is hard to describe my feelings – sometimes very sad, and other times, a feeling of complete happiness.

Over the years, I've enjoyed dancing with clients, face painting, tattooing, serving food, tying balloons, cleaning up or what ever else I am asked to do. I remember going to McLoone's Restaurant to pick up cookies that were being baked there and bringing them to an event. At the Special Olympics, Staten Island, when I asked a client to guess how many pieces were in the big plastic bottle, he looked at me very seriously and said, "A LOT." I responded by saying, "good answer," and he was so happy.

At a soup kitchen show last year, I face painted a snowman on a gentlemen. He could not stop looking in the mirror. He left and returned with a present for me – a doll which he previously made and signed so I would never forget him. I could go on and on about Holiday Express, as I have been a volunteer since 1994.

I decorated my first Christmas tree ever at a Holiday Express event. I was on the bus the first time we went to the Trenton Soup Kitchen and got lost. We were re-directed by children and Tim gave them all hats and gloves. The girls couldn't believe they were given gifts. I also remember the first time I served soup outside at St. John's in Newark.

I attended many first-time shows and I will remember them all. I remember watching the young volunteer children (my grandchildren included) board the bus to help children less fortunate, play games and help with crafts. I often felt bad if I couldn't get to an event, even guilty if I were ill. I was excited when I was asked to go to Columbine; however, I got the flu and could not attend. Needless to say, I was so very disappointed. I can go on and on about Holiday Express – it is my only addiction. My wonderful memories will be with me forever.

Around October of 2004, I will be moving to Myrtle Beach, SC. I will try very hard to come back to NJ for at least one week or maybe more to volunteer a few times with Holiday Express. I am saving some of my winter clothing for the events.



I do want to express my thanks to all of the members of Holiday Express for being part of my life!

THANK YOU, HOLIDAY EXPRESS! THANK YOU, TIM!

Keep Smiling & Be Happy!!

Sonny

...and Thank You, Sonny



Like so many of our volunteers, there's more to Rich Cali than meets the eye. The words husband, father, artist, musician, and caring volunteer are just the start. Read on for more on this long-time volunteer, one who helps Holiday Express reach out to those in need.

One day, I stopped Tim McLoone in a Red Bank parking lot and introduced myself. I told him I was an art director and would like to design a logo for Holiday Express. He told me that I should do that and invited me to the opening meeting for the 1997 season. I presented my logos to the musicians and they all selected our "famous" guitar in the Christmas tree stand. And the rest is history!

Although Holiday Express is much more than music, I believe the logo is a great image that encapsulates the fun and positive feeling everyone gets at a Holiday Express show, be it a public concert or a show at a soup kitchen. I do a lot of art work for local organizations and businesses and am particularly proud of our logo. I think it is a creative design and has proven to be a favorite in our community, and I have received many compliments on it.

I design almost all print materials for Holiday Express, with the exception of our great newsletter. I am responsible for many of our CD sleeves and covers; and the materials (invitations, reply cards, envelopes) for the Annual Dinner Dances. Additionally, I have designed the Townsend, Husserl, and Little Steven Awards that Holiday Express presents at the dance. In the beginning of my tenure with Holiday Express, I even made upwards of 100 hand-drawn and hand-lettered signs for the auctions. When I attend Holiday Express shows, I bring my markers and paper and draw personalized holiday drawings for clients. I get a pretty big turnout at my little table looking for their own hand-drawn Santa or Frosty with their name scripted across the top of the drawing.

I enjoy drawing at Holiday Express shows; but, at the same time, I feel sad because some moms have told me that my drawings are gifts for their kids under the tree. Although I feel like I have made it possible for someone to find some joy because of my talent, it's hard to do my drawings and then get in my warm car and go out Christmas shopping for my own kids – wondering if a magic marker drawing is all that some kids will get for Christmas.

My wife, Lissa, is also a Holiday Express volunteer. We have three children; Rich 25 years, Paul 22 years, and daughter Daria 15 years. Daria also volunteers occasionally at the warehouse.



My family also owns a great little coffee shop, Coffee Blue, on Main and Tenth in Belmar. Pop in for a cup of coffee or a specialty drink and a dessert. My two sons manage the shop. It is a fun place – cool art on the walls, comfortable couches and attractions such as Comedy Night on Tuesdays, Open Mic night on Wednesdays and an array of musicians on weekends ranging from 4 piece jazz combos to folk duos. *(Thanks for the free plug!!)*

I attended Middletown Township High School, class of 1969, and received a BA from Trenton State College. Currently, I am an Art Supervisor at Integrated Communications in Parsippany. I design advertising (ads, brochures, logos, direct mail campaigns) for large pharmaceutical companies. I have been in the advertising industry for almost thirty years, working for some of the largest agencies in the state. I also have a small freelance clientele that I service out my home studio. Other local logo designs I am responsible for are Quicksilver Jewelry, Red Bank (my first logo design); CRAZEES Ice Cream Shoppe, Rumson; McLoone's Riverside Dining, Sea Bright; Chapel Beach Club, Sea Bright; and the Monmouth University Hawks (which is also painted on the gym floor at the University). I was awarded the University design project after my preliminary designs were chosen over the designs of two design groups that deal strictly in the business of sports graphics – what a coup!

When not working, I play drums in the band Black River Circus. We play at local pubs such as Briody's, the Cabin and have even made some noise upstairs at McLoone's. The band is comprised of a bunch of guys who played together as the Black River Circus in our high school days. The entire band, still in the area after 30 years, decided to get back together. It's a blast – we specialize in mid sixties British Invasion Rock and Roll! Come out and see us – you may even find Holiday Express member Mark Murphy joining us for a song or two.

Thank you Tim McLoone for your vision. Holiday Express touches everyone who is involved. It is a great organization, with fabulous, caring, giving people. I am proud and privileged to be part of such a special group of people. Making small boys and girls smile during the holiday season is a very rewarding experience. Thank you Holiday Express!!



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 THE DATE 2004 SPECIAL EVENTS

Sunday, November 21
Annual Dinner Dance
Ocean Place
Long Branch

Friday, December 17
Count Basie Theatre
Red Bank

Wednesday, December 22
Convention Hall
Asbury Park

Spreading the Word by Nancy Sabino

The Holiday Express message was spread far and wide last season in the media, thanks, in part, to the efforts of the Communications Group.

The Communications Group has been increasing efforts to capitalize on longtime relationships within the media and cultivate new ones, and it seems to be working. With over 70 mentions in newspapers and magazines throughout the state, the 2003 season was advertised, photographed and reviewed from many different angles. Through the help of the Garden State Clipping Service, all mentions of Holiday Express were cut out, tagged and submitted with date and publication for archiving. This accounting will allow for better follow-up next year; and, hopefully, for more and better coverage.

The Communications Group's efforts began with our second annual Press Event, held this year in the newly-leased warehouse at the beginning of the 2003 season. This event provided the press who attended with a bird's eye view of the shelves piled high with donations, the process of filling gift bags and a number of volunteers who fulfill the many jobs that back-up the band during their month-long Christmas odyssey. In addition to providing great photo opportunities, this event also showcased the band, who played a few selections from their repertoire before being available for interviews. Representatives from some of the facilities where events are held also attended, giving the press access to many key individuals in the process. During the presentation, the interested reporters were invited to participate in any of the events held within their circulation area during the season, to bring a more local feel to their features.

Stories published after our Press Event included photos of the warehouse operation and mentioned the large number of general volunteers who help with the many details of the season. This helped bring new life to the stories and a new angle for readers who thought they already knew Holiday Express. All these 'hits' in the press help round out the understanding of the organization; reinforce the need for new and continued donations; and, attract more volunteers who can help bring hope to the many who benefit from the Holiday Express mission.