



THANKS TO
YOU
"THIS WAS THE
BEST YEAR EVER!"



**HOLIDAY
EXPRESS**

Volunteers
Delivering
the Gift of
Human Kindness

2011 Yearbook
Season 19





Tim McLoone, President

When I compose these notes each year, I am always tempted to say the same thing: "this was the best year ever!" Although that was once again true in 2011, I have much better news this time around: ***I am back in the band!*** In the earliest days of Holiday Express, I was obviously involved in every aspect of our operation. I would load and unload trucks (if we even had them), help set up the food, make sure we had enough volunteers, etc. This year, however, our operations, both in the office as well as at the events, reached such a point of organization that I was able to just stand behind the piano and sing. Although it felt weird at first, I eventually came to see it as the full maturation of this organization that means so much to all of us. I'm not totally sure how the rest of the band feels about it, but thank you all for returning me to where I belong.

Tim

Donald Pignataro, Executive Director

Once again, thank you for continuing to support and amaze us with your generosity. 2011 was truly a successful and meaningful year in many ways. We added six new locations to our "delivering the gift of human kindness" tour schedule and grew to 55 events this season, a 10% increase. Our 19th season of serving those in need by providing free holiday celebrations began November 15, at Mount Carmel Guild Behavioral Healthcare, Cranford, with event #755 and ended December 24, with events #787 & #788 at St. John's Soup Kitchen, Newark, and Trinity Soup Kitchen,

Asbury Park, where we touched hearts and souls, entertained, fed and distributed gift bags to more than 1,500 adults and children.

The varied audiences of adults and children in need of joy, hope and affection, are the reason we serve. The "side effect" of benefitting the family members and the caregiver staff at these facilities is also important. They often tell us our visit is their best day of the year and the joy we bring creates a positive emotional impact that lasts year-round. Another important part of Holiday Express is how the hearts and souls of those who make the events happen are also touched in countless ways. The musicians, non-performing volunteers and donors who support our efforts receive a personal feel-good that is difficult to fully explain. An emotional connection with people they probably would never have met is awakened and they become enriched by the opportunity to reach out to others. We are honored to have so many caring supporters, volunteers and donors, who open their arms to those less fortunate.

What we do is simple in concept, yet challenging to deliver. As an organization, we are fiscally and operationally sound as we continue to grow in both financial and human capital. Our Board of Trustees provides consistent leadership to assure we support those we serve along with maintaining responsible, transparent business principles. Our success comes from the diligent efforts of all those who work behind the scenes with tremendous passion and a strong sense of purpose for what we do.

On behalf of Holiday Express, I would like to express my sincere thanks for the kindness and generosity of the community. We thank you for affirming our mission.



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.

Yearbook Committee

Editors – Don Pignataro, Jill Weiss

Graphic Design – Jill Weiss Graphics

Contributing Editors – Amy Robinson, Ashley Hadar, Christine Mosher, Phyllis McQuillan

Photos by Scott Longfield, Suzy Graham Photography, Russ Pangborn

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

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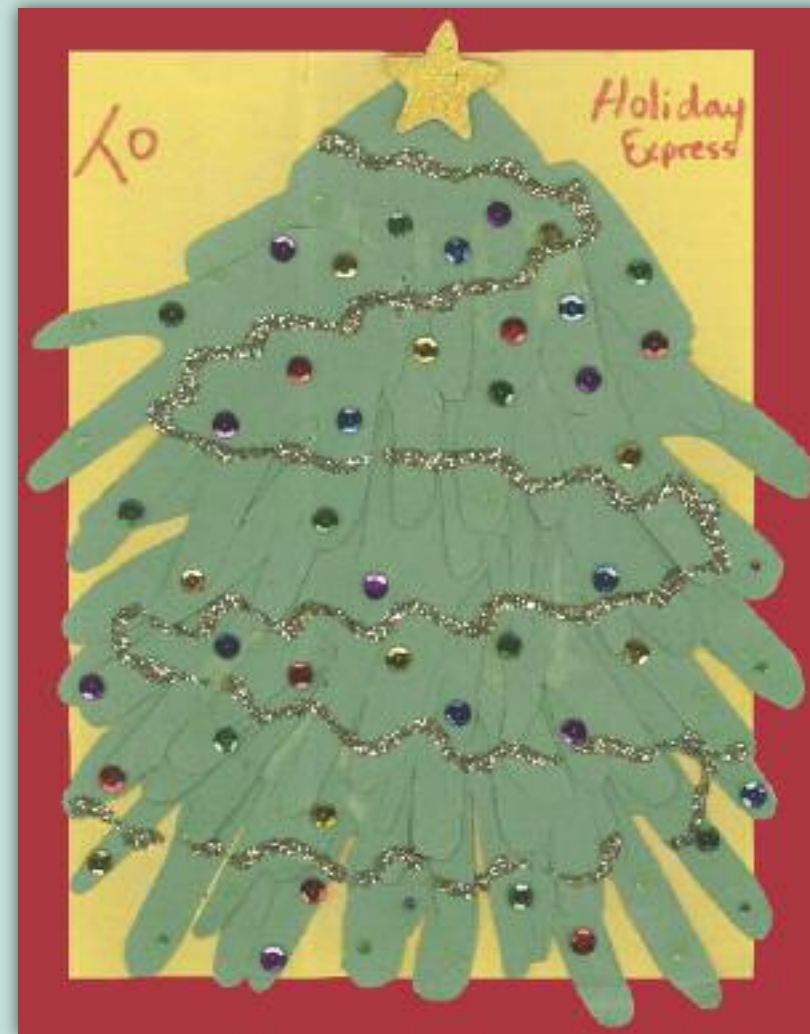
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How Could He?

“Today I met a young man for the first time
He said he loved me

Perhaps not in those exact words
But for this young man
whom you would think
would not know such love,
Abandoned by it
Neglected from it
Love would not exist in his limited existence.

So how could he know love?

For when I painted his heart
And he asked, with bashful eyes,
For the brush to stroke the initials of my name
at its center...

It's because he was born with love
Within
because they were all born with love
already from within

Even if they were conceived without it.”

Maxine Snow



Valerie Schiafone

Season 2011 By The Numbers

32 Days of Events
55 Events – 6 New Locations
1 Day had 3 Events
21 Days had 2 Events Per Day
10 Days were Singles
10,000 Miles Traveled

NUMBER OF EVENTS BY TYPE

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

VOLUNTEERS

More than 1,400 – Including 100 musicians
• 700 Adults and 700 Juniors
More than 15,000 total hours donated
• 250 new volunteers this year

Events

Average 35 volunteers per event –
including musicians
• 10,000 hours donated

Warehouse

1,200 Adults and Juniors packed gift bags
• 5,000 hours volunteered
700 juniors volunteered 2,500 hours
• 35 youth organizations brought 500 students
• 200 volunteered independently
500 adults volunteered 2,500 hours
• 8 corporate groups brought 300 employees and family
• 200 adults came on their own

GIFT BAGS DISTRIBUTED

More than 15,000 total gift bags
• 14,000 at events
• 1,000 distributed from other requests
Total estimated gift bag value is
over \$600,000

RAFFLE GIFTS

• 1,000 items to 200 winners at 29 events
• Raffle gifts valued more than \$10,000
• Gifts included: wallets with gift cards, DVD players, boom boxes, watches, iPod, personal CD players, musical equipment, sports equipment, sports jerseys and hats, jewelry, pocketbooks, makeup kits, spa kits, winter coats, fleeces, sweaters, sweat and lounging outfits, pjs, toys and art supplies, books, CDs & DVDs, bedding sets

FOOD SERVED

• More than 6,000 subs
• 1,500 slices of pizza
• 20,000 bags of chips
• 2,500 hot meals

Holiday Express

Making a Difference


In addition to the listing of where we traveled to in 2011, the following pages communicate the connection of hearts and souls. The musicians call it the tour schedule, the Elf volunteers refer to it as the season schedule; and to the disabled, sick or disadvantaged, it just might be the best day of their year. Our schedule – it's how we make a difference.

Adult Special Needs Programs

These programs provide comprehensive mental health services that promote full participation in community life. Individuals and families living with depression, mental illness, substance abuse or disabilities that impact learning, receive counseling, support and many other services in a safe compassionate environment. These services provide hope for recovery and enables individuals with disabilities or special needs and their families to live, learn, work and play in their communities with equality, dignity and independence.

Cerebral Palsy Sites

These programs provide education, therapeutic, social, residential and support services for people with cerebral palsy or other physical disabilities. They seek to maximize independence for individuals with developmental and multiple physical disabilities in the areas of communication, education, functional skills, social skills, vocational skills and employment.



December 15, 2011


Dear Amy Robinson, Ray De Stefano and The Holiday Express Volunteers,

I wanted to thank you so much for the wonderful party you threw for our Long Term Care children and their families on December 3rd. What a great way to kick off the holiday season. This year was exceptionally special. This is the first year we had so many families attend a special event. The word must have gotten around about Holiday Express and the wonderful things you do for our children and what a great party it is. It was so nice to see all the smiles and happiness fill the room.

The highlight for them was seeing Santa Claus and all the holiday characters dancing about. The children enjoyed their gift bags and are so excited to use the basketball hoop given to us from the Giving Partner. Your volunteers really go above and beyond for our children. Each year your group gives our families hope, happiness and joy even if just for a brief moment in time.

Again, thank you for all you do for our children and we are happy that you are a part of our extended family. We always look forward to next year when we will see each and every one of you again. We wish you and your families a happy holiday season.

Sincerely,



Rayna Correia, CTRS
Supervisor of Recreational Therapy/Child Life
& Long Term Care Therapy Services



2011 SCHEDULE

15-Nov	Mt. Carmel Guild - Union County ICMS	Cranford, NJ	8-Dec	Ranney School Holiday Express Benefit Concert	Tinton Falls, NJ
16-Nov	Spectrum for Living	River Vale, NJ	9-Dec	Children Center of Monmouth County	Neptune, NJ
18-Nov	St. Joseph's School for the Blind	Jersey City, NJ	10-Dec	Children's Specialized Hospital - Toms River	Toms River, NJ
21-Nov	Catholic Charities - Partners in Recovery	Trenton, NJ	10-Dec	New Lisbon Developmental Center	New Lisbon, NJ
22-Nov	Woodbine Developmental Center	Woodbine, NJ	11-Dec	Matheny Medical & Education Center	Peapack, NJ
22-Nov	Ancora Psychiatric Hospital	Hammonton, NJ	11-Dec	The Lyons House - Center of Recovery and Hope	Lyons, NJ
25-Nov	Red Bank Town Lighting	Red Bank, NJ	12-Dec	Ladacin Network	Wanamassa, NJ
28-Nov	Passaic County Elks Cerebral Palsy High School	Clifton, NJ	12-Dec	Woodbridge Developmental Center	Woodbridge, NJ
29-Nov	Regional Day School at Jackson	Jackson, NJ	13-Dec	Ocean Mental Healthcare	Toms River, NJ
29-Nov	North Jersey Developmental Center	Totowa, NJ	13-Dec	Eva's Village	Paterson, NJ
30-Nov	Medallion Care	Clifton, NJ	14-Dec	The Gateway School	Carteret, NJ
30-Nov	Passaic County Elks Adult Training Center	Clifton, NJ	14-Dec	Staten Island Special Olympics	Staten Island, NY
1-Dec	Norman A. Bleshman Regional Day School	Paramus, NJ	15-Dec	Easter Seals	Lincroft, NJ
1-Dec	Somerset Hills Residential Treatment Center	Warren, NJ	15-Dec	Count Basie Holiday Express Benefit Concert	Red Bank, NJ
1-Dec	Holy Trinity All Stars	Long Branch, NJ	16-Dec	The Lakeview School	Edison, NJ
2-Dec	The Alpha School	Jackson, NJ	17-Dec	Eastern Christian Retreat	Wyckoff, NJ
2-Dec	Millburn Regional Day School	Millburn, NJ	17-Dec	Trinitas Medical Center - Brother Bonaventure Residents	Elizabeth, NJ
3-Dec	Children's Specialized Hospital - Mountainside	Mountainside, NJ	18-Dec	Hunterdon Developmental Center	Clinton, NJ
3-Dec	Mercy Home	Brooklyn, NY	18-Dec	St. Francis Inn	Philadelphia, PA
4-Dec	Vineland Developmental Center	Vineland, NJ	19-Dec	CVR	Eatontown, NJ
4-Dec	Crystal Lake Healthcare & Rehabilitation	Bayville, NJ	19-Dec	Hagedorn Psychiatric Hospital	Glen Gardner, NJ
5-Dec	A. Harry Moore School	Jersey City, NJ	20-Dec	The Center for Educational Advancement	Flemington, NJ
5-Dec	CPC Behavioral Healthcare/Park Place/ Community Connections	Asbury Park, NJ	21-Dec	Blythedale Children's Hospital	Valhalla, NY
6-Dec	Hawkswood School	Eatontown, NJ	21-Dec	NJPAC Holiday Express Benefit Concert	Newark, NJ
6-Dec	Straight & Narrow	Paterson, NJ	23-Dec	University Behavioral Healthcare	Piscataway, NJ
7-Dec	Trenton Area Soup Kitchen	Trenton, NJ	24-Dec	St. John's Soup Kitchen	Newark, NJ
7-Dec	Trenton Psychiatric Hospital	Trenton, NJ	24-Dec	Trinity Church Soup Kitchen	Asbury Park, NJ
8-Dec	The Harbor School	Eatontown, NJ			

TO: Peg Ford, Holiday Express Giving Partner Coordinator

Dear Peg,

I am so glad that you encouraged me to attend the show at Trinitas on Saturday. I was, to say the least, overwhelmed. I'm really learning what Holiday Express is all about and I couldn't be more pleased to be associated, in some small way with such a wonderful organization.

I expected a couple of hours of Christmas songs but as I quickly learned, I was treated to so much more. This was truly about bringing a few hours of joy to people who have so little. I was so moved by the group's enthusiastic interaction with the residents. It was obvious that both volunteers and residents were having a great time. Later, talking with the musicians and other volunteers it was apparent that they derived as much pleasure out of participation in the program as did the Trinitas residents. I DO understand that feeling. I also had a chance to speak to some of the Trinitas staff and learn first-hand how much this means to them and the charges in their care. Thank you for affording me the opportunity to help these dedicated people who give so much of themselves.

I am looking forward to a wonderfully rewarding association with Holiday Express.

Jay S. Weisberg, President
Cost Resources, LLC




Schools For Children With Special Needs

The students at these schools have various classifications which include, but are not limited to: auditorily impaired, autism, communication impaired, cognitively impaired, multiply disabled, other health impaired, specific learning disability, and traumatic brain injury. The schools provide a safe and nurturing educational environment dedicated to the vision that individuals with disabling conditions are entitled to a full and meaningful life.

Soup Kitchens

Feeding all who come hungry and in need is the main mission of these soup kitchens, yet they do much more. Services have expanded to include outreach programs such as adult education, computer training, medical services, women and children centers, health care counseling, screening and referrals, social services, children's activities, food pantries and arts and crafts.



 **Alpha School**

December 21, 2011

Dear Mr. McLoone,

I wanted to thank you for another wondrous Holiday Express event. No matter how many times you and your merry volunteers come to visit, we are always overwhelmed with all the spirit and joy that you bring to us.

In an effort to express our thanks in a more meaningful way, my staff and I decided to do some fundraising for Holiday Express. Our goal was \$1,000. From the time you left us last year until the week before you arrived again this year, we ran various fundraising activities. Much to our surprise, we surpassed our goal and gave you \$3,050.

I think that our usual excitement about your visit was heightened by our knowing that we were going to give something to you. There really is truth in that it is better to give than to receive. It was so much fun to watch you and your volunteers open our boxes. You could see the surprise in your faces when you pulled the ribbons and all the money came out bill by bill. All of us could see how touched you were, and we in turn were touched as well. We hope that in some small way our donation can help you to help others.

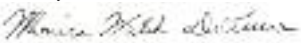
I have found these two quotes which I think best express the mission of Holiday Express.

"Sometimes when I consider
What tremendous consequence
Come from little things
A chance word, a tap on the
Shoulder, I am tempted to think...
There are no little things."
Bruce Barton

"There are no little things.
'Little things' are the
Hinges of the universe."
Fanny Fern

While it may seem that not much can come from a two-hour visit between human beings, my staff and I can bear witness that your words, your touching us with your companionship and music is no little thing. It really is a hinge in making my staff and students feel so much joy during the holiday season.

Sincerely,



Monica Walsh DeTuro
Principal

Holiday Express

Making a Difference

Medical, Educational, Behavioral, Residential and In-Patient Facilities

These facilities support a wide range of individuals with disabilities throughout all stages of life. A full continuum of care is offered for adults, children, adolescents and their families, as well as for those with various addictions. Services provided include medical and educational treatment for children and adults with medically complex developmental disabilities and associated clinical conditions. Residential and inpatient programs focus on all aspects of the resident's development, including educational, emotional, medical, social, and spiritual needs.

Developmental Centers

New Jersey Developmental Centers are home to approximately 2,700 individuals. Residents have intensive needs related to their developmental disabilities and many also have co-occurring mental health, behavioral and/or medical needs. The average age is 51 and more than 80 percent of the residents have lived in a developmental center since childhood. Many residents are non-ambulatory and must use a wheelchair for mobility.



Saturday Soup of Asbury Park Last Resort Food Pantry

January 31, 2012

Dear Mr. Pignataro,

We at Saturday Soup must send you a sincere thank you to you and your team for once again thinking of us this past Christmas Eve. Our staff members, volunteers, and guests are grateful that you chose to close your 2011 season with us, and we hope to continue to host you as best we can next year and after.

Since I started in March, this was my first experience with Holiday Express, and although the experienced Saturday Soup veterans had warned me about the scope of the event, I don't think I was prepared for everything that I saw – our gym was unrecognizably transformed into something wholly new and festive. Knowing how hard we work each week in preparing to serve our regular guests, your wonderful volunteers displayed impressive energy and creativity in utilizing our modest space well beyond what I had thought its potential to be.

While we're happy that we were able to host so many guests this past Christmas Eve, I think we would all agree that the measure of success of this event was not found in the number of guests served, but rather in the spirit of welcome you and your volunteers showed to each and every one of them.

Christmas is obviously a busy time for all churches, but I'm not exaggerating when I say that our entire staff has looked forward to Holiday Express on Christmas Eve as a year-defining event not just for our anti-hunger programs, but for our entire church mission. Trinity's most outspoken motto is "God's unconditional love practiced here," and I'm hard pressed to find any moment in the past year when this was better exemplified than this past Christmas Eve. Trinity thanks you for being such a gift to us and to our community.

Sincerely

Kristofer Koller
Director of Programs, Trinity Church
koller@trinitynj.com



December 9, 2011

Amy Robinson
Director of Operations
Holiday Express

Dear Amy, Christine, Barry and especially Tim McLoone,

It is a wonderful feeling that there is magic all around us during the Holidays, but to actually EXPERIENCE THE HOLIDAY EXPRESS MAGIC is a priceless gift! We were so grateful that you thought of our program and came to Mercy Home, Brooklyn with your magical show, and a party for us to enjoy. Your generosity to every one at Mercy Home has made such a difference!

THANK YOU!

Even though the words are in BIG letters they do not come close to expressing the wonder and gratitude we felt with the love, goodness and generosity the Holiday Express volunteers extended to all of us at Mercy Home. You have the very best band! Everyone was up dancing or twirling in their wheelchairs; singing and taking part in the "12 Days of Christmas."

The food was delicious and it was "served with a smile" by all the "Elves." Gift bags were over the top, filled with lots and lots of goodies. You should have seen the smiles and expressions of joy on the residents' faces as they opened their gifts. And a very special thank you for the BIG SANTA GIFT – a laptop (Giving Partner gift)! You are all so very generous. Please know that each and every gift brought great joy to all at Mercy Home.

We know that we are blessed to have you in our lives this Christmas. You are extraordinary people and we thank you for being our partner in spreading joy!


We wish you a Merry Christmas! May your celebrations be all you want them to be.

Gratefully,



Sister Kay Crumlish
Executive Director





December 22, 2011

Dear Tim:

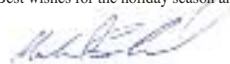
On behalf of all of us at the Center for Educational Advancement (CEA) and Spring Run School, I thank you, the volunteers, the people and companies that donated to the holiday party and everyone associated with the administration of Holiday Express for the fabulous holiday party you brought to CEA earlier this week.

I have been working here at CEA for over eighteen years and can honestly say that there have been few occasions that could rival the 100% engagement of all of our program participants, students and staff members as much as the Holiday Express audience did. Thank you very-very much for helping so many people get so fully into the holiday spirit.


This past year has been particularly difficult one for all at CEA, for a variety of reasons, and the event this past Tuesday was exactly what was needed to get everybody ready for a great holiday season and psyched-up for a great year ahead.

Many of our trainees, program participants and students wished to let you know just how grateful they were to you all for the party so we put together a collage of event pictures and they were eager to sign it. Please share it with one and all at Holiday Express.

Best wishes for the holiday season and for the coming New Year.



Michael Skoczek
President/CEO





Children's Hospitals


These hospitals serve infants, children and young adults affected by traumatic brain injury, spinal cord dysfunction and injury, premature birth, autism, developmental delays, and life-changing illnesses. They are dedicated exclusively to the diagnosis, care and treatment of children with complex medical and rehabilitative needs.

Shelters and Multiple Services Programs for the Needy and Addicted

These programs provide a wide range of services for the poor in New Jersey, including food, shelter, substance abuse treatment, primary medical and dental care and a variety of transitional and permanent housing options. Additional supportive services include, parenting classes, play therapy, personal finance workshops, job training and placement.

Psychiatric Hospitals

These hospitals serve a designated New Jersey population. They provide quality comprehensive psychiatric, medical and rehabilitative services that encourage maximum patient independence and movement towards community reintegration within an environment that is safe and caring. These are adult inpatient facilities that offer a multidisciplinary team approach to development and implementation of care.



STEPHEN A. CHIDYILLO, M.D., F.A.C.S.
General Jersey Plastic Surgery

December 23, 2011

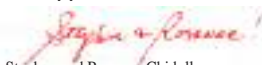
Dear Mr. Pignataro:

I hope that this letter comes with good health for the holiday season. I have written to you in the past; however when someone is doing a great job, you can never hear the words "thank you" enough. My family just returned from the Holiday Express event at the Count Basie Theatre, and let me tell you it was better than ever, and this is why.

As I have told you in the past, I have a 17 year old autistic son who attends school at Children's Center of Monmouth County. Once again Holiday Express was able to perform at his school, which means a great deal to the children. Well, this year we took our son to the Count Basie concert for the first time. We were not sure whether he would be able to sit for the whole performance, so I made special arrangements with the theatre to have aisle seats. Not only did he stay for the whole performance, but he did not want to leave. He also enjoyed seeing one of his school mates perform "The Grinch" with Tim. It was the best Christmas present two parents could have ever received to attend the show with our son as "a family."

Thank you for all your efforts and the joy you and Holiday Express brings to so many unfortunate ones during the holiday season.

With deep personal regards I remain
Sincerely yours,



Stephen and Rosanne Chidyllo

Giving Partner Program

Our Holiday Express Journey

by Linda Belmont

One of the hallmarks of Holiday Express is our Giving Partner Program. Through the generous support of donors who want to help, Holiday Express fills specific needs of the various organizations we visit by matching individuals or companies with a desired “wish list” item. This match-up of donor and organization forges a warm and personal relationship which often develops a true partnership in caring, especially when the gift is presented in person.

(Intro by Tim McLoone)

Frank and Linda Belmont are longtime friends of mine (hey, I played their wedding!), and when I came up with the idea for Holiday Express they were among the first onboard. When we developed the “Giving Partner” Program, I knew all that had to take place was a phone call and they would be “in.” For many years, the Belmonts quietly supported St Paul’s in Paterson. When we went to Columbine, Frank, who is an Emmy award-winning TV producer/director, volunteered to join us and run the stage production. They now support North Jersey Developmental every year and continue to be the best friends that Holiday Express could possibly have.

In the late ‘70s, my husband Frank Belmont met Tim McLoone while doing a television production of the Jersey Shore Marathon for the now-defunct New Jersey Network. They instantly hit it off and thus began what would become a lifelong friendship. Fast forward to 1993 – Tim was getting a group of musician friends together to perform locally during the holidays for those in need. This was not surprising – Tim is always looking for some new venture, and helping people is usually involved somehow. In 1999, he organized a concert at Columbine High School in honor of the students, victims, and victims’ families. Frank’s television production company, Belmonte Productions, was invited on board to tape the concert.

Meeting the Columbine students and families was something Frank’s associates will never forget. As Holiday Express took off, and snowballed year after year into a huge undertaking, Frank and I became aware of the Giving Partners program and asked to become involved. Since we live in North Jersey, the first couple of years our organizations of choice were St. Paul’s Community Development Corporation and Eva’s Village in Paterson. We attended the events, and were enamored by the joy

and gratitude of the recipients of these Holiday Express festivities. What especially impacted us was how “unglamorous” these shows were. It was obvious that the band members and general volunteers were involved for one reason only – they love bringing joy to these audiences.

One year, I was persuaded to don the “Rudolph” costume. I was a poor Rudolph! My vision was impaired by the enormous reindeer head, but even more so by my tears, which were caused by the little children who were running up and hugging me as Rudolph. Another year, Frank made a better Rudolph. He’s a bit more outgoing!

Currently, our favorite benefactor is the North Jersey Developmental Center in Totowa. Frank grew up in Totowa and it seems a perfect match. We have come to know the residents – a happy, affectionate and fun-loving bunch. And, of course, the staff is dedicated, sincere, and so appreciative of the band’s performance and their Giving Partner Christmas gift. This past year Frank and I were pleased to be able to donate a Dual Trike so that residents can enjoy a bike ride outdoors, guided by a staff member.



2011 Giving Partners

- Ansell, Grimm & Aaron
- Athletes’ Alley
- Beth Tormey & Jake Snyder
- Buttonwood Drive Shrewsbury Neighborhood
- Celestino Family
- Chris Housen – Housen Financial
- Christine’s Hope for Kids
- Cowan Guteski & Co.
- CrossFit of Shrewsbury
- Denny Family
- DJ Totland & The Totland Group
- Falcetano & De Conca
- Fallon Family
- Gartz Family
- Hadar & Wotton Families
- Hutchins, Farrell, Meyer & Allison Accountants
- Jason Lamp – Deal Golf Shop
- Jay Weisberg
- Joanne & Frank Colella
- Kate Brannan
- Keale Family
- Lincroft Panther Organization
- Linda & Frank Belmont
- Maggie & Doug Raynor
- Mary Lindsey and Anne White
- McLoone’s Boathouse
- McLoone’s Pier House
- McLoone’s Rum Runner
- McLoone’s Supper Club
- McLoone’s Woodbridge Grill
- Melissa Marshall
- Merrill Lynch - Red Bank
- Meserlin Family
- Morgan Stanley-Smith Barney, Shrewsbury
- Otsuka America Pharmaceutical, Inc.
- Pat Wotton
- Phil San Filippo
- RK Johns & Assoc.
- Staub Family
- Sunnymeath Asset Mgmt.
- TD Bank – Bridgewater
- The McIntyre Group
- Travel Leaders and Quaker Risk Mgmt.
- Untracht Early
- Vitt & San Filippo, LLC
- Wallach Family
- Walsh and Pignataro Families
- Wells Fargo Advisors

Travelers Community Connections

Partners with Holiday Express

and Supports Art Program

at A. Harry Moore School

By Neil McDevitt, Regional VP, Travelers Insurance

Corporate partnerships create win-win ideas. Employees are increasingly concerned about giving back; and when their employer embarks on a cause-related initiative, it can instill a great sense of pride, particularly if it offers employees an active opportunity to become engaged as volunteers. See how Travelers Insurance Co. contributes in a meaningful way.

I began volunteering for Holiday Express in 2010 when the New Jersey offices of Travelers in Edison, Morristown, and Marlton, began organizing and promoting community volunteerism among employees. The Community Charity Board at Travelers, of which I am a member, nominated Holiday Express for a grant through the Travelers Community Connections Grant Program which supports volunteer community giving projects and encourages team building and networking.

In addition to the Holiday Express mission we sought to support the arts and selected the A. Harry Moore School in Jersey City, which helps students with multiple physical, medical and cognitive disabilities. Through the grant that was awarded, we earmarked a portion of the funds to buy quality art supplies for the school and conducted an “Art Day” in October, with approximately 30 Travelers volunteers along with volunteers from Frenkel and Company, which Travelers works with and who had supported Holiday Express previously.

It was truly amazing to see the accomplishments at the school, and the uplifting environment the faculty creates. The students made Holiday Express posters which were presented to Tim McLoone at the Holiday Express event on December 5, 2011, and are now proudly displayed in the Holiday Express warehouse. Each classroom created a poster using the Travelers Red Umbrella prior to our arrival and presented it to each of the volunteers creating a deeper impact that day. Many volunteers



built relationships with the students - their posters are still seen around our office today.

Our offices held drives and collected much needed items for the gift bags and Travelers employees volunteered at the “Santa’s elves” warehouse, packing and preparing those gift bags for distribution to those in need. The enthusiasm generated that day sparked the interest

and commitment of additional employees who wanted to get involved after seeing the difference that Holiday Express makes in people’s lives.

We were so inspired by our work with Holiday Express that Angel Palumbo of the Travelers Claim department, her husband Joe and I decided to participate in additional individual volunteer activities. We traveled with them and participated in several venue events in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and concluded the year with a wonderful day at the Trinity Church Soup Kitchen event feeding and handing out gift bags to more than 700 homeless and low income families in Asbury Park, NJ on Christmas Eve.

Our work with Holiday Express has brought many Travelers’ employees closer together as a group and has sparked the desire to volunteer. More importantly, it provided an avenue for people to volunteer in a meaningful way. I would encourage any company looking for meaningful volunteer opportunities to explore what Holiday Express offers. You will be inspired by your experience and once you see the impact of your work, you will have the strong desire to do more.



(1) The Grinch, Tim McLoone; (2) Gladys Bryant; (3) Tim and the band at NJPAC; (4) Jeannette Crofts, Ron Bruer; (5) Judy R., Debbie Sfraga, Sue Wilson; (6) Kristian Rex dancing with a happy guest; (7) Carol Mizell, Patti Delaney; (8) Elf Renee Altshul; (9) Mike Schwartz, Jim Celestino; (10) Jane Denny, Peg Ford; (11) Bob Bandiera, Tim McLoone; (12) Gary Schwartz; (13) One of our younger guests at Eva's; (14) Donna Edington choreographing the Disco Santas; (15) Dede Duffy serving the guests at Straight & Narrow; (16) Pam McCoy; (17) Diane Kilzen; (18) Layonne Holmes; (19) Karen Credle, Kathy Severini; (20) Jessica and proud dad, Jeff Fraller.



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.



(21) Tim and the band playing to a full room; (22) Some of our talented singers at Count Basie; (23) Happy party guest, Ron, with Katie Bordiuk; (24) Debbie Vaughn; (25) Joe Grillo; (26) Mike Dockery; (27) He's a star to us, Mike Schwartz; (28) Frank McGarry; (29) Gary Sfraga; (30) Kathy Severini, April Kelly; (31) Jeannie Ryan; (32) Sue Lepis, Sheldon Edmond; (33) Byron Smith; (34) The Kathryn Barnett Dancers; (35) Drummer Jim Mizell entertaining Count Basie guests; (36) Amy Broza, Hollis Cooper; (37) Jill Weiss, Dede Duffy; (38) Bernie Dippolito; (39) Marilee Celestino; (40) Mark Murphy and Andy McDonough playing during the Clambake Cocktail Hour.

2011 - Season 19



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Amazing Ann by Amy Robinson



Ann Robinson unloading the truck
at St. John's Soup Kitchen, 2009



Amy Robinson

For those of you not familiar with our family, Ann was the fourth child out of eleven. Our parents taught by example, and personally showed us the importance of volunteering. Our mother, Mary, regularly volunteered for several charities including Holiday Express until her death in 2002. Our entire family is involved with Holiday Express, including spouses and children. Ann's husband Bill is a Holiday Express Executive Board member, and he and their two boys, Evan and Conor, have been volunteering at Holiday Express events for many years. It is very much a family affair and tradition.

The loss of Ann came as a great shock to all of us. We have all struggled to get through this past year without her. Many people who have gone through a major loss will tell you that the first birthday, holiday, anniversary, experienced without the missing loved one is the hardest. During this past year all of those events were extremely difficult for us. The prospect of facing our second year without her weighs heavily on all of us. I can't say for certain that it will be any easier, but we know it will be forever different. For us, time may not necessarily heal all, but it does help a little. We also take comfort in hearing others say such wonderful things about my amazing sister, and knowing she touched so many lives; and so we thank you for all of your concern and support during these trying times.

Something was missing from this past Holiday Express season. Personally speaking, I couldn't help feeling like some sort of sad, gaping hole had opened up, a void that became obvious whenever I walked into our warehouse. The reason for this emptiness was the absence of my sister, volunteer extraordinaire... Ann Robinson.

Ann was my partner from the very beginning. We first joined Holiday Express together in 1995 as face painters. While we both became Event Mangers, Ann would take on many other jobs over the years. She soon found herself in charge of crafts at all events, which is no mean feat in itself. She later took over for our sister Margaret and organized all the raffle gifts for the events. Most recently, for three seasons (2008 - 2010), Ann was in charge of the morning warehouse volunteers. She also sat on the Executive Board for a number of years.

Ann was very dedicated to this organization and really loved what Holiday Express was all about. She would jump in with both feet and help out wherever needed. Under her direction, the morning warehouse operation ran like a well-oiled machine, and she was respected and loved by her fellow volunteers – in fact many of them became her close friends. In speaking with all of them this past season, I can tell you that they felt a deep sadness as well.



Ann Robinson, Michele Farrell, Joan Mercer,
Mike Schwagger



Ann Robinson and
Jeanne Cosentino
at Eva's Village,
December, 2010



Ann Robinson with a Holiday Express guest





Holiday Express 2011 Benefit Clambake



(Top) Holiday Express Band featuring the Horn Section; (1) Kathy Shoup, Maureen McCrink; (2) Ashley Hadar, Michele Macchia; (3) Donna Edington, Pat Wotton; (4) Harry Sassaman, Carol Stillwell; (5) Ed Flago and Gerry Fiorella, Shore Point Distributing Presenting Sponsor, Tim McLoone, Christine Mosher, Vincent Annarella, Honoree; (6) Peter Reinhart, Numa Saisselin, Laurie Saisselin, Nancy Reinhart, Marilyn Perricone; (7) Tim McLoone with Dennis Husserl Award winner Father Lou Bihr and David Mactas from Straight & Narrow, along with Donald Pignataro; (8) Our magical tents! (9) Karen and Bob Becker; (10) Alan Grant, Mary McCrink; (11) Stephanie and Steven Crawford; (12) Peg and Nick Ford dancing along with a sandy floor full of enthusiastic Clambake supporters that also included an official Holiday Express conga line!



Perceptions

Maxine Snow

Holiday Express Found Me!



I originally heard about Holiday Express in 2009, through musician (and my mentor), Rob Dye, who suggested I attend the October general meeting. Because I am also a singer, he wisely suggested I

become a general volunteer for the first year to experience all the aspects of the events. I fell so in love with being out in the room with our guests that I've remained in that capacity.

Having just completed my second season, my "Elf" participation consists of serving food, distributing gifts and face painting. I have also assisted in the warehouse. My favorite activity has to be face painting. I have had some of the greatest interactions with the guests... especially the children!

Holiday Express has impacted my life by giving me a hope that I have longed for and thought did not exist.

Having had the experience of being homeless and living out of my car for a short time, it allowed me to understand first hand what that level of living felt like. Fortunately, even though I have no family here, I have some incredible friends who did what they could to make sure I kept my chin up. Many homeless are not that fortunate. And yet, regardless of my friends' support, I still experienced the feelings of hopelessness and of being so insignificant. Holiday Express took that all away, even if for just one day. It's a day to look forward to feeling like we can all make a difference.

Back in my better days, 15 years ago or so, I used to take up collections for warm, used coats, toys and infant clothing from my clients when I worked in a hair salon. Then I would deliver the coats to shelters in the city, and the toys and clothes to a local children's hospital that was in need. But the project grew too big. I needed help, but wasn't able to attain it. So I wished and hoped, and without me

knowing about it until several years ago, my wish had already come true... Holiday Express found me!

I have some great stories to tell from my two years with Holiday Express, but this one tops them all! During an event, a group of children came over to the table for face painting. We were having a grand time when the eldest in the group (about 9 years old) began to ask me all sorts of questions: "Are you married?" No sweetheart, I'm not. "Do you have any kids?" she asked. Nope, I do not. "Don't you want kids?" I would love to but I can't. "Why? You're over 50!?" Laughing I told her, no darlin', I'm just not able to have them. Then, with a bewildered look on her face she said, "God must have made a mistake." Out of the mouths of babes!

Michelle Phillips

Holiday Express – It's More Than Just The Music...



I was hooked from the start! Who knew that Holiday Express was so much more than a band and a home for leftover Halloween candy??

This past season I learned what Holiday Express was all about. My good friend Pat Wotton convinced me to join her at the volunteer sign-up meeting; and after the introduction, I immediately joined – and for me there was no turning back.

I initially started by working at the warehouse packing gift bags. Items like a toothbrush, soap or a pair of gloves were carefully and lovingly bagged, knowing that this might be the only holiday gift a person might receive. This simple, yet rewarding, task made me feel so fortunate and every product placed in the gift bag reminded me how lucky I was in my life.

One of my most memorable times was attending the Easter Seals event at Christian Brothers Academy. On top of seeing the generosity of Christian Brothers, who hosted the event, it was a privilege and an honor to be able to bring happiness for so many individuals with disabilities and special needs. The smiles and hugs we

received said it all. For two hours it seemed that the people we saw forgot their daily struggles, and came together to laugh, dance, eat and have a great time.

Holiday Express has become part of my family. One of my sons became a junior volunteer; my younger son looks forward to volunteering, and my husband, Jim, helped by holding down the fort during the season. Being a part of Holiday Express truly enriched my life, and we all are looking forward to making it an annual tradition.

Corey Wager

The Most Rewarding Holiday Season Ever

"When we seek to discover the best in others, we somehow bring out the best in ourselves."



This quote speaks volumes to me right now having had the honor and privilege to be a part of the amazing organization called Holiday Express.

There is no better feeling in the world than seeing the smiles on the faces of the people we perform for. To watch the way music can affect people and change their lives is so inspiring.

I was always one of those teenagers who made a mile long Christmas list of things I wanted, but did not really need. This year was different; being a part of Holiday Express showed me what really matters. My experience taught me to appreciate how lucky I am with all the blessings in my life. There are so many people who don't have it easy. I saw so many expressionless faces standing on long lines at soup kitchens to get a hot cup of soup; so many kids who couldn't leave their hospital beds, and so many sad people in a facility for their entire life.

Unlike the people we visit with Holiday Express, I am healthy, have amazing friends and family, and the good fortune to be living my dream. My time with Holiday Express is always truly rewarding. I have made many new friends and experienced so many moments which are transforming me and changing my life.



Save the Date:
Sickles Market Wine & Cheese Tasting
A Benefit For Holiday Express
Friday, November 2, 2012



Sickles Wine & Cheese Tasting

Sickles Market greenhouse was transformed for the more than 200 guests that attended the 8th Annual Wine & Cheese Event benefiting Holiday Express. Carol Stillwell and Bob Sickles raised the roof with their auctioneer skills!

(1) Dawn Reinhardt enjoying a Sickles Cake Pop; (2) Eileen Higgins, Kathie Sterzinar; (3) Vocalists Amy Broza, Sheldon Edmund, Karen Credle, Kathy Severini; (4) Teresa Staub, Holiday Express Board Member Maureen Staub, and Janet Giunco; (5) Harry Sassaman, Mark and Barbara Murphy, Bob Sickles; (6) Mary and Tom Lawler, Trish and Donald Pignataro; (7) Tim McLoone, Philip Perricone, Donald Pignataro, Marilyn Perricone; (8) Deidra Hampton, Pat Wotton, New York Football Giants Running Back Rodney Hampton; (9) Mary Ann Larkin, Carol Stillwell, the Perricones, the Reinhardts and friends.

SICKLES

MARKET
 SHARING QUALITY SINCE 1908



On Becoming an Elf! by Joanne Colella

This past holiday season, my husband Frank and I gave ourselves a very special Christmas gift – we became volunteers with Holiday Express.

I first learned about Holiday Express ten years ago when I attended a seasonal kickoff media event, complete with a mini performance by the band. I found it enchanting. I was even more awestruck when I had the chance to see Holiday Express volunteers in action at a private event. My mantra for years after that, whenever I tried to explain to someone about Holiday Express, was simply, “You’ve got to see it for yourself to understand it.”

Boarding the bus that transports the volunteers, one is immediately struck by the warm camaraderie among everyone. Loading and unloading the supplies, prepping the stage and facilities, setting up and serving food are all carried out with seemingly magical, military precision. Everyone is assigned a task, whether it’s face painting, pouring beverages, handing out sparkly halos, or suiting up to be a dancing elf. And everywhere you look, there are hugs... lots and lots of hugs.

Frank and I volunteered for five events together – each of them completely different, and yet all of them so alike by the shared spirit that permeated the air. I remember taking a deep breath each time we’d step into a new setting, feeling a bit overwhelmed by the sheer numbers – and sometimes, the sheer need – and nervously wondering, “Can I do this? Will it really make a difference to them?” And then, tentatively reaching out to grasp that first hand and touch someone, I would immediately discover how they, in turn, touched me.

Tim McLoone often acknowledges that it may be inconceivable that an annual two-hour visit can have such an impact on those who live with daunting, sometimes desperate, situations all year long. I now believe that it does – and I know for sure the indelible impact that it’s had on my husband and me. For that moment in time, as the talented band performs and the exuberant volunteers prance, dance, smile, and sing



their way around the room and through the aisles, the rest of the world, with all its worries and woes, disappears for residents, staff, and Holiday Express volunteers alike.

Over the course of each of those two-hour visits, countless miracles unfolded. Gazing into someone’s seemingly unresponsive eyes, there would suddenly be a glimmer of recognition, perhaps a shy but undeniable smile, an unexpected touch as a hand reached out. Some people simply asked for repeated hugs, which they joyfully returned. At one nursing home, I spent time with a lovely woman who adored singing and knew the words to each and every Christmas tune, and I assumed she had grown up learning them all. “Merry Christmas,” I told her when the show came to an end. Looking up at me, she smiled and said, “Happy Hanukkah.”

Lest there be any lingering doubt about how much these annual visits mean and how long they are anticipated and remembered, there was a woman in a wheelchair who positioned herself near the entrance. In her lap was a gift-wrapped package, and she asked me if a certain Holiday Express volunteer was with us. I explained that hopefully she’d be arriving soon. The resident continued to wait patiently, searching each face that passed through the door, until at last the friend she sought appeared. Her face beamed as she looked up and the two exchanged excited hugs. The Holiday Express volunteer was touched when she realized that the gift in the resident’s lap was for her, and I suddenly wondered if there was a good chance the exchange had been planned and looked forward to all year.

On the way home from our fifth and final show in December, Frank and I both realized that we were sad and disappointed to be done.

I try to help spread the good news about Holiday Express every chance I get. Unfortunately, sufficient words still seem to escape me and my advice to others still remains the same: “You’ve got to see it for yourself to understand it.” So clear that busy calendar, set aside the seasonal stress, and hop on the bus with Holiday Express. Make a donation. Pack some bags in the warehouse. Become an elf!

Helping Holiday Express Deliver Volunteer Spotlights

Laraine and Ned Gaunt

Compassionate, caring and kind all come to mind when you think of Laraine and Ned Gaunt. Whether it is packing gift bags in the warehouse, knitting scarves or dancing with a wheelchair bound teenager, the Gaunts embody the essence of Holiday Express. They both give of themselves, they embrace people and they embrace life.

I never forget getting on the bus in Sea Bright with no clue as to what I was doing. I was so nervous, but when I got off the bus someone handed me a box to take inside, and then it all began! Ned actively listened to all my stories about my experiences the first year, and decided to volunteer the following year.

During my 10 years and Ned's nine years of volunteering, we've enjoyed participating in many activities. I've been on the dinner dance committees, helping with the auction; worked as an event manager and organized knitting projects for volunteers and clients. Ned has volunteered, as well, at many events. He is often Frosty, the Grinch, Rudolph or Cookie Monster. In 2005, he also helped with the design and construction of the Soup Kitchen at St. Marks in Keansburg.

Holiday Express has had a profound impact on our lives because Holiday Express IS our Christmas. It is amazing how all the things we used to worry about before Christmas – decorating, shopping, wrapping, entertaining – are now on the back burner. We can't imagine spending the holiday season any other way, or without our Holiday Express family! Our two children and five grandchildren also understand how much Holiday Express means to us. They don't live locally, but this past season our oldest grandson, Sawyer, was visiting and went with us to Trinity Church Soup Kitchen on Christmas Eve.



It is heartwarming how contagious it can be volunteering with Holiday Express. We were so happy last year when our good friends, Harriett and David Hinton, started volunteering. One of my co-workers, Darlene Margulis, has become a part of Holiday Express by getting her students involved in several projects. As a teacher and director of the tolerance program at Tower Hill School in Red Bank, I implemented my "It's OK To Be Different" curriculum which teaches tolerance in elementary schools. One of the segments, 'Understanding Disabilities' shows students that

interacting with someone who has a disability is the same as interacting with anyone else – always treat every person with kindness and respect!

There have been so many unforgettable Holiday Express moments for us. As a mother and grandmother, I am always touched by the parents who come to the events to experience the joy their children get when Holiday Express arrives. In particular, at one event last year, I watched a Mom about my age with her son who was my son's age. Once again, I was struck with thoughts

about what it must be like to have a child who needs so much care and attention, and who may not reach the goals that we all take for granted. The son was non-verbal but the Mom told me how much he likes Holiday Express T-shirts, especially the kelly green one that I was wearing. She asked if it could be purchased since he really liked the color. When I found out we were sold out of that color, I took mine off and gave it to him. His Mom cried and he beamed with pride. Holiday Express always reminds us of how fortunate we are.



BethAnne Clayton

When BethAnne Clayton joined Holiday Express, we hit the jackpot. A great singer... gifted songwriter (just listen to her tune "This Year It's Gonna Be Great" on our "Happy Holidays" CD)... wonderful keyboard player... and masterful band leader... all rolled up into one. With her country music background and New Jersey roots, BethAnne has inspired our audiences and energized our mission.



I have vivid memories of the year I first joined Holiday Express – little did I know that the special boy growing inside me would someday become a part of this whole new experience I had just embarked on! I've always felt a connection between Holiday Express and my son; the whole experience happening simultaneously, teaching me to count my blessings each and every day.

On December 16th after playing a gig till 2 am, my son Paul was miraculously born. Somehow he had managed to tell me to get to the hospital because the umbilical cord was wrapped around his neck four times and he was being strangled. Five days later, after a not so fun debate on the home front, I drove myself to the final Tradewinds concert, pummeled into a snowy handicapped parking space, stumbled my way in the back door and joined my friends on stage. I can still hear Dolores Holmes saying, "girl, you crazy," and the astonished look on Tim's face – yet both seemed to understand my desire to be there.



shows than in former years. It has brought a new perspective to my experience with Holiday Express. As performers we are used to "applause," but at these events you may just get a loud unfamiliar noise, or observe a jerking rocking motion that lets you know people are responding to the high energy in the room. With confirmation from the directors, teachers, caretakers and families, it is gratifying to know it is usually 100% joy.

In 2007, I married the most wonderful man (and not a bad drummer either!), Steve Paddock, and he has since become a part of Holiday Express, and made many

friends as well. Growing up in a musical family myself, it has happily come full circle for me by having a husband and son who are also drawn to help Holiday Express fulfill its mission.

A personal highlight for me was when my son Paul, at age 6, sang a self-written song, "I Love Santa Claus," at the Red Bank Town Lighting with Mr. and Mrs. Claus dancing and thousands singing along. Paul, now 9, is quite an accomplished bass player; so not only will he share his talents in the future, but I'm also confident that his experience with Holiday Express at such a young age will positively influence his life and his personal values.

What more can a mother ask than to have her child see first-hand just what the gift of human kindness really is? Thank you Holiday Express, you mean more to me than you'll ever know!

I am grateful for the day I met Tim McLoone, and for the many opportunities he gave me in challenging times. Besides singing at Tim's restaurants regularly, my day job is working for Tim in the corporate office for his many establishments. I repeatedly remind Tim it would be cheaper if he just adopted me!

As each season comes and goes (ten years now!), I am constantly reminded how blessed I am to be part of this organization.



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



**HOLIDAY
EXPRESS**

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