

Holiday Express brings joy and cheer with area concerts

Cheryl Makin, @CherylMakin 4:24 p.m. EST December 12, 2014

Holiday Express delivers music, food, gifts, financial support and friendship year-round



(Photo: Courtesy of Holiday Express)

With music and seasonal merriment on board, Holiday Express is rolling through local towns with their annual interactive holiday party.

After a performance last week for the Matheny Medical and Educational Center in Peapack-Gladstone, the nonprofit organization will be pulling into the station for concerts with Easter Seals and the Emmanuel Cancer Foundation before Christmas.

Composed of local musicians who volunteer to perform for those affected by cancer or other disabilities, Holiday Express was founded in 1993 by restaurateur/musician Tim McLoone. Year-round, Holiday Express delivers music, food, gifts, financial support and friendship.

From 12 to 2 p.m. Dec. 13, Holiday Express will team up with the Emmanuel Cancer Foundation at Johnson & Johnson World Headquarters in New Brunswick. The Emmanuel Cancer Foundation provides a variety of specialized services, at no charge, to any New Jersey family facing the challenges of caring for a child with cancer.

Continuing its tradition of sharing joy, Holiday Express will visit with Easter Seals NJ at 11 a.m. Dec. 18 at Christian Brothers Academy in Lincroft. Easter Seals NJ has worked to meet the continuously growing needs of people with disabilities and their families in the state for more than 65 years.

Each Holiday Express event comes complete with a rock n' roll band, costumed characters, parodies and visits from the Grinch, Frosty and Santa Claus. While the live music provided by the Holiday Express musicians enlivens the event, volunteer elves are always busy, dancing, smiling and giving out plenty of hugs.



A Holiday Express volunteer performs with a member of the audience at one of the 60 concerts in which they participate each year between Thanksgiving and Christmas.
(Photo: Courtesy of Holiday Express)

"Holiday Express is a very joyous occasion," said Keena Ramseur, Holiday Express acting coordinator. "The Christmas spirit is shown as soon as you walk in with smiles and laughter and all dressed up in holiday garb. Music abounds and holiday elves helpers are everywhere, making all feel warm and welcome."

More than 1,300 volunteers, including 100 professional musicians, travel throughout the tri-state area in November and December, bringing approximately 50 "interactive private parties" to groups that might otherwise be overlooked during the holiday season. The Emmanuel Cancer Foundation and Easter Seals NJ are just two of more than 60 charities Holiday Express consistently visits each year between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

McLoone has personal ties to Easter Seals NJ from his childhood, as they provided invaluable assistance to his family when his brother had polio.

Holiday Express volunteers work year-round to prepare and perform the private charity programs at nonprofits across the state. They visit specialized schools, psychiatric facilities, homeless shelters and soup kitchens. Activities include a meal, gift bags and raffle prizes. Every year, Holiday Express has grown in reputation, in volunteer members and in reach.

"The program participants interact with all the volunteers and band members throughout the afternoon," Ramseur said. "The program participants leave with happy thoughts of spending the holidays with their families."

For more information about the Emmanuel Cancer Foundation, visit www.emmanuelcancer.org.

For more information on Easter Seals NJ and its statewide disability services, call 732-257-6662 or visit www.eastersealsnj.org or www.facebook.com/eastersealsnj.

To get involved with Holiday Express this holiday season, visit <http://www.holidayexpress.org/how-you-can-help> (<http://www.holidayexpress.org/how-you-can-help>). For more information about Holiday Express, visit www.holidayexpress.org (<http://www.holidayexpress.org>).

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