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November 2, 2017 11:30 PM

Make the most of Thanksgiving in Chicago

by [Shannan Younger](#)

There are many reasons to be thankful this month, including living in a great community with fantastic holiday activities for families. To keep your little turkeys giggling instead of grumbling, check out these fun activities in and around the Thanksgiving holiday.

Everyone loves a parade!

The **McDonald's Thanksgiving Day Parade** has been winding through the streets of Chicago on Turkey Day since it was first staged in 1934 to lift spirits during the Great Depression. Decades later, the parade is still spreading smiles to viewers of all ages, both those who see it in person and those who watch the live television broadcast on WGN.

More than 100 units, including balloons, marching bands, equestrian units and floats, join in the parade that travels about one mile down State Street, from Congress Parkway to Randolph Street.

Get your kids giving

Put the giving into this year's Thanksgiving when you and your family join the Basket Brigade, which assembles and delivers Thanksgiving baskets to thousands of families in need. The Basket Brigade of Suburban Chicago will meet at the Streamwood Park District Community Center at 9 a.m. on Nov. 18. Children are welcome to volunteer and there is also a kids' room where they can color pages and write notes that get put in the baskets.

"We are strong believers in getting them involved and developing a giving heart at a young age," says Brian Walsh, founder of the **Basket Brigade of Suburban Chicago**. There is also a **Basket Brigade** in Chicago.

Other organizations where kids can volunteer that help get food to those in need year-round include **Feed My Starving Children**, with locations in Schaumburg, Libertyville and Aurora, and the **Greater Chicago Food Depository**, which holds Kids Day once a month when kids 5-13 may volunteer.

Pre-feast family fun run

There are a lot of turkey trots and fun runs that allow you to feel the burn before you binge on turkey and pie (see page 70). Check out the **Turkey Trot 5K** in Chicago's Lincoln Park, which also features the Plymouth Rock Ramble, a race for the tiniest turkeys 2-12. Kids are divided into age groups. Those between ages 2-4 will run 50 yards, kids 5-6 will run a quarter mile and kids 7-12 will run a half mile.

If you have kids looking to log more mileage, the **Naperville Noon Lions Turkey Trot 5K** has age groups for kids ages 10-14 and for those 9 and under. They also allow running strollers and walkers on the course that begins and ends at Naperville Central High School. If you're looking to cut down on time in the kitchen, a pancake breakfast in the cafeteria is provided to participants at the end of the race.

Get cookin'

Thanksgiving is the perfect occasion to get kids cooking and involved in preparing the family feast. The folks at [The Kids' Table](#), a cooking school in Chicago that offers classes for kids and families, are expressing their gratitude for friends with Friendsgiving-themed celebrations for toddlers to teens. Recipes might include dishes like Thanksgiving Burgers, Corn Potato Chowder, Root Veggie Mash, Rustic Apple Pie and Pumpkin Whoopie Pies. And since they are vegetarians, all the classes and celebrations will be turkey friendly!

"Getting kids involved in the kitchen gives them ownership over the meal and can transform cooking from a chore to a fun family activity. Cooking and sharing a meal together is a wonderful way to practice giving and gratitude—perfect for the Thanksgiving holiday but also any time of the year," says Elena Marre, founder of The Kids' Table.

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November 2, 2017 11:30 PM

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