

From the community: Basket Brigade Delivers More Than Just Turkeys this Thanksgiving



Over 300 Volunteers Gather to Assemble and Deliver Thanksgiving Dinners to Families-in-need (Posted by brian0000221, Community Contributor)

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This past weekend, over 300 volunteers braved both rain and snow to gather together with the Basket Brigade of Suburban Chicago to assemble and hand-deliver complete [Thanksgiving](#) dinners to 673 local area families-in-need.

The Basket Brigade of Suburban Chicago was founded by Streamwood residents Brian and Cherish Walsh with the mission "to put the GIVING back into Thanksgiving." Founded in memory of Brian's mother, Lorraine M. Walsh, the Basket Brigade of Suburban Chicago combines aspects of fundraising and volunteerism along with personal and spiritual growth.

Each Thanksgiving basket delivered includes a turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, gravy, rolls, corn, marshmallows, cranberries, vegetables, and more; even a delicious pumpkin pie for dessert.

Volunteers assist in packaging the meals, and are then provided with the names of families-in-need who have been nominated by a variety of sources including private nominations on the Basket Brigade's website as well as names provided by other local nonprofits, churches, daycares, schools and other social service organizations.

"Each basket contains enough food to feed a family of five," says Basket Brigade Treasurer, Eric Hartmann, "and the thought that we are literally bringing Thanksgiving to over 3000 people in our local area is absolutely mind-blowing."

"Part of the magic of the day," says Brian Walsh, "is the aspect of growth for the volunteers as well as for the recipients. The volunteers get a direct person-to-person experience in seeing how their volunteerism is directly impacting the lives of these families-in-need."

Also included in each Basket are handmade coloring pages with notes from the children of the volunteers. "We really tried to make the overall experience of the Basket be both functional and inspirational," says co-founder Cherish Walsh, "and we definitely want our kids to get an early start on a giving heart. We've had recipients tell us that the coloring pages were their favorite part, and it was going to be hung prominently on their fridge!"

The Basket Brigade of Suburban Chicago Committee spends several months fundraising, planning, organizing and finding the recipients. "We work closely with our communities to find the volunteers and the encourage the necessary donations, both private and corporate," said Brian Walsh, "we have also been able to partner up with many cool organizations, nonprofits, and civic organizations to identify families -in-need. It is really a team effort, and we are excited to have expanded our delivery area to nine different communities this year; Streamwood, Hanover Park, Bartlett, Hoffman Estates, Schaumburg, Palatine, Elk Grove, Elgin and South Elgin."

"The whole process is always an emotional one," says Cherish Walsh, "but the stories, and the notes of thanks that we receive from the recipients, and the reports we receive back from the volunteers of the joy that they witness are truly inspirational. We received one photo back this year of a young boy literally HUGGING the turkey that his family had received. It simply does not get any better than that!"

"The Basket Brigade provides much more than just a Thanksgiving dinner; each basket also delivers a message of hope for those receiving it, the spirit of giving for the volunteers assembling and delivering the basket, a sense of community for those individuals and corporations who have donated and sponsored the costs to purchase the basket, and a sense of gratitude for the person who nominated the family to receive the basket," concludes Brian Walsh, "the secret to LIVING is GIVING."

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