

# From the community: Basket Brigade Delivers Thanksgiving Dinners...and a Message of Hope



Over 200 Volunteers in 2016 Delivered 268 Complete Thanksgiving Dinners to Local Families-in-need (Posted by brian0000221, Community Contributor)

By **Community Contributor brian0000221**

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**T**he secret to LIVING is GIVING. A simple principle that is the guiding force behind the Basket Brigade of Suburban Chicago. Entering their third year, the Basket Brigade delivers complete [Thanksgiving](#) meals to local area families-in-need. In 2016, they put together a crew of over 200 volunteers and purchased, packaged and delivered 268 complete Thanksgiving dinners; this year, their goal is 500 meals.

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 includes a turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, gravy, rolls, corn, marshmallows, cranberries, vegetables, and more; even a giant pumpkin pie for dessert.

Volunteers assist in packaging the meals, and are then provided with the names of families-in-need who were nominated by a variety of sources including private nominations on the 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 Volunteer Coordinator, Eric [redacted] Thanksgiving to thousands people in our local area is

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[redacted] as well as the recipients, as they get a direct person-to-person experience in seeing how their volunteering is directly impacting the lives of these families-in-need."

The Basket Brigade is a chapter of the Anthony Robbins Foundation's International Basket Brigade movement and the dignity of the recipient is very important. Each package contains a note stating that "This comes to you from someone who cares about you. All we ask is that you take care of yourself well enough to be able to do this for someone else someday." Also included in the box are handmade coloring pages and notes from the children of the volunteers.

"We really tried to make the overall experience of the box be both functional and inspirational," says co-founder Cherish Walsh, "and we definitely want our kids to play a big role in that, so we came up with crafts and coloring pages that could be included in the box, which serves two purposes: it allows our children to feel more involved in the process, and keeps them occupied while the parents are assembling the boxes."

The Walshes and their team spend several months 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."

In its first two years, the Basket Brigade of Suburban Chicago delivered complete Thanksgiving dinners to 195 families in 2015, and 268 families in 2016, delivering food, a message of hope, and changing lives along the way.

"The whole process has been 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 drivers of the joy they witness, the people literally jumping for joy, praising God, and thanking them over and over again, are truly inspirational."

"As Tony Robbins says," concludes Brian Walsh, "the secret to LIVING is GIVING."

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The Basket Brigade of Suburban Chicago is a 501 (c)(3), a dba of The Lorraine M. Walsh Memorial Foundation.

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