

CATHERINE COOK SCHOOL



2026-2027 VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

Volunteer at Catherine Cook!

Volunteers are vital to the Catherine Cook School community. They offer their time and talent and, in return, reap the rewards of contributing to the success of the school and its students. Whatever your schedule, abilities, or interests, there is a volunteer opportunity for you.

There are many volunteer opportunities in which parents with busy schedules during the weekdays can participate at Catherine Cook. Many of our events and committees offer nighttime and weekend volunteer hours. Even if you only have a couple hours to spare, please consider signing up to volunteer.

- It's a great way to meet other parents and forge new friendships
- Volunteers act as positive role models for our students
- It's a great way to get to know faculty and staff
- Volunteer contributions significantly and positively impact the community
- It's an opportunity to learn more about your child's education

Ready to volunteer? We're happy to have you! Please go to our volunteer web page at catherinecookschool.org/volunteer and fill out the volunteer form by **Friday, August 21**. You will receive an email confirmation upon submission. If you have any questions about the form, please contact communications@ccookschool.org or 312.266.3381 ext. 4125.

Office of Admission

The Office of Admission holds events throughout the year aimed at incoming and prospective families. If you have any questions specifically about Admission events, please contact the Office of Admission at admission@ccookschool.org or 312.266.3381 ext. 2131.

Admission Open House

Catherine Cook will hold an Open House on **Sunday, November 8, 2026**, to welcome all families interested in exploring the school and learning more about a Catherine Cook education. Friendly parents/guardians who love Catherine Cook and would like to share their enthusiasm with prospective parents are needed to greet, answer questions, and share their experiences.

Admission Play Dates

From December through February, the Office of Admission hosts play dates for prospective Early Childhood students. Welcoming parents and guardians who love Catherine Cook and would like to share their positive and enthusiastic experiences with prospective parents are invited to assist in hosting these events. Volunteers greet the families as they arrive and socialize with the prospective parents while their children visit the classroom. Volunteers may sign up for a single play date or for multiple dates. A schedule will be sent to volunteers so they may choose dates and times that work with their schedules.

Ambassador Program

The Ambassador Program helps new families integrate into the Catherine Cook community by pairing them with established families. These “Ambassador Families” welcome new families to the school, introduce them to other families, plan social outings with them, and answer any questions they might have. Ambassadors engage new families during the summer months before the school year begins. They participate in various events scheduled by the Admissions Office including coffees, play dates, and the Summer Welcome Reception. Those selected to be Ambassadors for the next school year will be matched with incoming families in spring 2026 and will maintain contact throughout the 2026-2027 school year.

Tour Assistants

Tour Assistants help the Office of Admission during tours with prospective families to provide a warm welcome and answer questions from the “parent/guardian perspective.” Options for both daytime and evening tours will be available.

Prospective Family Outreach

These volunteers assist the Office of Admission in establishing and maintaining relationships with prospective families. Volunteers may write letters, make phone calls, attend community events, and assist with other communications as needed.

Office of Development

Annual Gala

The Annual Catherine Cook Gala brings the entire Catherine Cook community together to support the school by raising funds for the annual operating budget. The event typically includes dinner, live and silent auctions, and entertainment. Many volunteers are needed to put on an event of this magnitude. Volunteers can play small or large roles, depending on their time and interests. If you have any questions specifically about the Annual Gala, please contact Lindsay Bartlett, Director of Development, at 312.266.3381 ext. 2174.

Planning Committees

Various Gala planning committees meet throughout the school year to determine the evening's events, secure donors and sponsors, and work through every detail that goes into the Gala. Members of these committees dedicate a great deal of time and thought to the event.

Day-Of Volunteers

A group of volunteers set up on the morning of the Gala. This includes the dinner area, the silent auction, decorations, and everything else needed to make the event a success. Volunteers are also occasionally needed to assist during the event.

Gala Co-Chairs

Ann Gorran, Maggie Hale, Jamie Miller

Annual Giving

The Annual Giving Cabinet is a group of dedicated volunteers, often parents, who work closely with the school's Development Office to support the Annual Giving Campaign. Volunteers co-chair the Cabinet and are integral to the success of this philanthropic initiative. Through small subcommittees, the Cabinet's goal is to promote community and connection, while cultivating donations and raising awareness for the school's financial needs and desires.

Parent Association

Every Catherine Cook parent or guardian is automatically a member of the Parent Association (PA).

The PA exists to strengthen school spirit and build community. It is made up of committees that organize a range of social and educational events, while also supporting faculty, staff, and students through various initiatives.

Each committee relies on the time and energy of parent/guardian volunteers to succeed. Volunteer opportunities vary to accommodate different schedules—some are recurring, while others are one-time commitments. They are offered throughout the school year at varying times (day and evening), making it easy to get involved whenever it works best for you.

Whether you are looking to meet other families, support school events, or just find a fun way to stay connected, there's a place for you in the PA!

To learn more, visit the Parent Association webpage at catherinecookschool.org/pa. If you have questions about volunteering, feel free to email us at pa@ccookschool.org.

Back to School Block Party

Join this committee and help host our annual, adults-only evening of cocktails and live music on Schiller Street to celebrate the start of the year. We are looking for volunteers to help with everything from early planning, catering, and décor coordination to day-of set-up and clean-up. It's the perfect opportunity for anyone who loves event planning and wants a fun, rewarding way to connect with parents, faculty, and staff.

Community Cares

This committee provides recognition and support to members experiencing meaningful life events. The goal is to ensure individuals feel seen, valued, and connected to the community during times of difficulty or celebration.

Culturefest

Celebrate the rich diversity that makes our Catherine Cook community so vibrant. This committee leads a week-long celebration that honors the many racial, ethnic, religious, geographic, gender/sexuality, and cultural identities represented in our school. Through storytelling, sharing, and connection, we create space for every voice to be seen and heard. Day-of Volunteer needs: Set-Up Crew: Help transform the space into a welcoming celebration zone; Clean-Up Crew: Ensure everything is packed up and spotless afterward; Student Experience Crew: Keep our youngest participants engaged during the event.

Faculty and Staff Snacks & Appreciation Lunch

This committee organizes snacks each month to show gratitude for our hardworking faculty and staff. Volunteers sign up for the month(s) that work best with their schedule and are responsible for purchasing and delivering snacks ahead of the designated day.

Fall Fest

Kick off the fall season with connection and celebration! This event brings the entire Catherine Cook community together in October to foster engagement, build relationships, and celebrate the season. With festive fall-themed activities for all ages, it's a joyful way to welcome new families, reconnect with old friends, and strengthen our school spirit. We rely on the support of our amazing community to make this event a success! Volunteers are needed to help transform the field site into a festive fall celebration as well as pack up and tidy the area after the fun. Whether you can lend a hand for an hour or the whole event, your help makes a huge difference!

Harvest and Halloween Celebration

Each October, this creative crew transforms Catherine Cook into a festive celebration of Halloween and the fall harvest! Volunteers bring the magic to life by helping design and create decorations, adorning the school with spooky and seasonal flair in mid-October, and packing it all away after the holiday wraps up. This committee also coordinates and guides our much-loved Halloween Parade around Cobbler Square—a highlight of the season for students and families alike.

Lunch Support

Help give our amazing teachers a well-deserved break! This committee provides adult supervision in the Cafeteria from 10:50 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., allowing faculty and staff time to enjoy lunch, prep for the afternoon, and reset for the rest of the day. Volunteers help oversee lunch for SK through 4th Grade students and assist with light cleanup between lunch periods. You're welcome to choose the days that fit your schedule—no minimum number of shifts required. Whether it's once a year or once a week, every bit of help is appreciated!

School's Out Extravaganza

Celebrate the school year and warmly welcome new families! This committee plans a lively, family-friendly gathering for current and incoming Catherine Cook families. Held annually on the Sunday before the last week of school, the event is a joyful way to connect, relax, and kick off summer celebrations together. The tradition typically takes place at Franklin Fine Arts Field, offering plenty of space for outdoor fun and community bonding. Volunteers needed for Set-Up Crew: Arrive early to get everything picnic-ready; Activity Helpers: Oversee games, crafts, or entertainment stations; Clean-Up Crew: Tidy up and pack away after the event.

Service Committee

Inspire compassion, connection, and action within our Catherine Cook community. This committee provides meaningful opportunities for families to engage in service projects throughout the year. By organizing hands-on activities and donation drives, we help students and parents give back, build empathy, and make a positive impact—together. Whether it's assembling care kits, collecting winter gear, or supporting food drives, this committee helps turn compassion into action.

Spirit Committee

This committee fosters enthusiasm and pride for Catherine Cook. Volunteers are needed to help coordinate and run the faculty/staff vs. student games during Cook spirit weeks, which take place in November and February. Volunteers will also help decorate the school to foster Cook pride during spirit weeks as well as assist with our Spirit Swap initiative.

Middle School Opportunities

High School Night

On High School Night, schools in and around Chicago, as well as boarding schools from all over the country, assemble in our Gymnasium to speak with Middle School students about the high school options available to them. Volunteers assist with setup, hospitality, and cleanup. Please contact Eddie Pryce at epryce@ccookschool.org.

History Fair

Middle School students begin working on History Fair early in the school year. By spring, the projects are complete, taking the form of papers, display boards, videos, websites, and performances. Volunteers serve as judges, helping to rate the projects, some of which will ultimately go on to larger competitions. Please contact Liz Kruse at lkruse@ccookschool.org.

SEL Opportunities

The Middle School SEL class tackles a variety of topics related to public speaking and health. Blaire Strom would like to connect with parents who are interested in being guest speakers, collaborators, or mentors in the following areas: Interview practice for 8th Graders in the fall and acting as resources for drug education, mental health, reproduction, sexuality, and other topics in the spring. Please email Blaire Strom at bstrom@ccookschool.org.

Key Contacts

Division Heads

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Office of Admission

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Parent Association Committees

Executive Committee

Nadine Saber
President

Andrea Chapa
Vice President

Cheryl King
Secretary

Adam Beane
Treasurer

Back to School Block Party

Nikki Coon, Lauren Keyser, Abby Mason, and Chris Meyer

Community Cares

Molly Watkins

Culturefest

Emily Dillingham, Puja Gogawale, Monique Perlmutter, and Nadia Sadeghi

Faculty and Staff Appreciation

Lisa Cotton, Scott Manwaring, Gina Ness, and Jenni Sorenson

Fall Fest

Leslie Brosk, Lisa Hall, Anu Muniyappa, and Marissa Schaefer

Harvest and Halloween Celebration

Alice Becker, Jenna Gaston, Shana Gearty, Hana Lee, and Christina Rabaut

Library Support

Leslie Brosk, Kami Davis, Puja Gogawale, Lisa Hall, Julie Levenstein, Jamie Miller, Jenni Sorenson, Virginia Uriostegui, Genia Yovankin, and Tim Yovankin

Lunch Support

Sarah Fedderke and Sarah Murphy

Room Parent Coordinators

Leslie Archer, Kelli Burd, and Brooke Torrenga

School's Out Extravaganza

Fazilat Farhat, Mandy Jasnoff, Saray Owdom, and Anna Thomas

Service Committee

Megan Chessare, Millie Frank, Betsey Graiss, Joslin Woods, and Amber Zelazny

Spirit Committee

Alex Dugan, Virginia Uriostegui, Mike Wiletzky, and Lauren Worley