

WHITE HOUSE WELCOMES JENNIE-O FOR ANNUAL TURKEY PARDONING CEREMONY

Thanksgiving will always be a special time of year for Jennie-O Turkey Store. This year, Jennie-O was hosted at the White House to celebrate the occasion. On Monday, Nov. 20, two JENNIE-O® turkeys, named Liberty and Bell, were presented by the National Turkey Federation (NTF) and formally pardoned by President Joseph R. Biden during the 76th National Thanksgiving Turkey Presentation in a ceremony on the South Lawn of the White House.

Steve Lykken, Jennie-O Turkey Store president and NTF chairman, was joined by Jose Rojas, Jennie-O Turkey Store assistant vice president of Live Production, in the presentation of the turkeys to President Biden.

“To say that the JENNIE-O® brand is honored to be a part of this historic 76th Thanksgiving presentation is an understatement,” Lykken said. “We are thankful to President Biden and the National Turkey Federation for warmly welcoming us, and Liberty and Bell. We enjoyed a whirlwind of activities these past few days and we’re grateful for the turkey producers and farmers that deliver food to our tables this holiday and every day.”

The annual pardoning of White House turkeys has become a time-honored tradition. The National Turkey Federation first became involved in the National Thanksgiving Turkey Presentation in 1947 with President Harry Truman. It has continued for 75 years across 14 successive administrations. The JENNIE-O® brand team announced its participation in this year’s ceremony on Aug. 24, the first day of the Minnesota State Fair.

The 2023 National Thanksgiving Turkeys made the journey from Minnesota to Washington, D.C., last week, receiving the five-star treatment befitting turkeys of their stature. Liberty and Bell were driven in their own personal vehicle and stayed at the historic Willard Intercontinental Hotel before they were officially pardoned by the 46th President of the United States. Following their visit to the White House, the turkeys will return to the experienced care of veterinarians, faculty and students at the University of Minnesota’s College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences, where they will receive housing, daily care, and access to veterinary services.

The JENNIE-O® brand team has also been donating turkeys left and right this holiday season, including recently in record-breaking fashion.

On Nov. 13, World Kindness Day, the JENNIE-O® team shattered the previous GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS™ title for the “Largest Donation of Turkeys in 24 Hours” with its donation of 15,000 whole turkeys. The JENNIE-O® brand team partnered with NBC’s Today Show, where weather and feature anchor Al Roker took part in the record-breaking occasion. Broadcasting from New York City, Roker and the JENNIE-O® team donated 15,000 turkeys to local partners of Feeding America, the largest charity working to end hunger in the United States. Seven thousand, five hundred turkeys were provided to the New York area through their partners, Food Bank for New York City and City Harvest. The other 7,500 turkeys were donated to one of Feeding America’s Chicago partners, Greater Chicago Food Depository.

Eight Jennie-O semi-trucks were deployed from Minnesota to New York and Chicago, where the turkeys were hand delivered to each Feeding America location. Each bag contained a whole turkey, as well as cooking tips, recipes, and information about the JENNIE-O® brand team’s 1-800-TURKEYS hotline, where home cooks can speak with turkey experts about any and all Thanksgiving-related meal-prep questions and emergencies.

The previous GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS™ mark for “Most Turkeys Donated in 24 Hours” was 7,620 turkeys, weighing 142,117.54 pounds in 2022. This year, the JENNIE-O® brand team donated 15,000 turkeys, weighing more than 320,450 pounds.



Jennie-O Turkey Store has a long tradition of giving back and spreading gratitude, especially during the holiday season. In 2022, they partnered with esteemed chef, cookbook author, and beloved TV personality Carla Hall and honored cafeteria staff across the country by hosting school cafeteria takeovers in select cities. A special Thanksgiving season visit took place in Los Angeles, complete with a beloved holiday meal. In 2021, they worked with YouTube phenom and philanthropist MrBeast and Beast Philanthropy to give away 10,000 turkeys to MrBeast's hometown of Greenville, N.C. The brand also consistently gives back to its home state of Minnesota. Throughout the last five years, they teamed up with professional football player Adam Thielen and his foundation to donate thousands of turkeys during the holiday season.

Separately, Jennie-O is donating more than 5,000 turkeys this holiday season to additional charities in the U.S., totaling more than 20,000 turkeys donated this Thanksgiving season.