A restaurant fundraising gig is a good opportunity to work side-by-side with your Kiwanis family. The Century High School Key Club helped cook and serve breakfast with Rochester Day Makers Kiwanians at a local Applebee's.

Dining for dollars | Eateries open their doors to help Kiwanis-family clubs

For the Kiwanis Club of Rochester Day Makers, Minnesota, partnerships with local restaurant franchises flip a couple thousand dollars into a scholarship fund.

Applebee's provided all the equipment, kitchen space and food needed for a pancake breakfast, explains club President Marie Alexander. All the Kiwanians needed to bring were volunteers. And they brought the Kiwanis family with them to help fix a menu of pancakes, sausage, juice and coffee.

"We had kids from the Century High School Key Club serving, and they also helped wash the dishes," Alexander says.

The Kiwanians are now planning a new, less labor-intensive restaurant project with Outback Steakhouse. Lunch guests will choose items off a preselected menu for $10, and the club gets $5 of the proceeds.

The club nets more than $1,000 a meal. "That will be kind of nice, because we won't have to cook," Alexander says. "We'll just go in and eat. And it's a good-size meal that includes a fresh salad, roll, grilled chicken breast or rack of ribs, coffee or tea and cheesecake for dessert."

—Cathy Usher

Order up

Keep these tips in mind if your club initiates a fundraising partnership with a restaurant:

- Don't forget the franchises. Many, like Applebee's owner Gala Corp., encourage community involvement.
- Use restaurant waitstaff.
- Put volunteers in the kitchen.
- Schedule your meal to end before normal restaurant hours begin.
- Put a tips jar at the door.