

But Why: A Podcast for Curious Kids

How big is a Macy's parade balloon?

November 14, 2025

Jane 00:20

This is But why: a Podcast for Curious Kids from Vermont Public. I'm Jane Lindholm. On this show, we take questions from curious kids just like you, and we find answers.

Amelia 00:30

Hi, I'm Amelia. I'm eight years old, and I live in Portland, Oregon, and I have a question about the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, and my question is, how do those big balloons hold on just a tiny string?

Jane 00:44

Do you enjoy parades? I do. I love seeing all the people walking by, often in amazing costumes. The parade floats are cool too, where trucks pull a trailer that's been decorated to look like a boat or a bear or a tropical paradise. Sometimes people ride in the floats, and I especially love the marching bands, usually from nearby elementary and high schools, and sometimes professional musicians as well. One of the biggest parades in the world is the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York City. It happens as the name might have given away on Thanksgiving Day, which is always the fourth Thursday of November in the United States.

Jane 01:30

The New York City government says about three and a half million people line up along the parade route through the streets of the city to watch the parade in person, and about 50 million people watch the parade on TV. That's a lot of people! So when the folks at Macy's asked if we'd like to go behind the scenes to see what it takes to actually make the parade, we here it but why we're happy to say yes. So you know, the parade happens on Thanksgiving Day. It's about three hours long from start to finish, wrapping up right around noon. But how long do you think it takes to work on the parade so that everything is ready to go for the millions of people who watch it? Couple of weeks, a couple of months? How about a couple of years? That's right, it takes almost two years to prepare for each parade. That work is done by a lot of different people, including artists, sculptors, carpenters and designers, and the work is overseen by this guy.

Will Coss 02:34

I'm Will Coss. I'm the executive producer of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

Jane 02:37

If you had a group of kids from all over the world, ages five to 10 sitting in front of you crisscross applesauce. How would you describe an executive producer of a parade?

Will Coss 02:47

Sort of like your teacher? I have an opportunity to review all of the work that our very talented team here at Macy's studios creates and we work together as a community to execute one of the largest and most fantastic parades in America.

Jane 03:09

The But Why team met up with will cost at the Macy's studio in Moonachie, New Jersey, just a few miles from New York City. We pulled up to a pretty boring, looking big building in an industrial complex with lots of giant warehouses and big box stores. From the outside, you probably wouldn't think anything all that exciting to you would be going on inside, but once you open the doors, it's magical.

Will Coss 03:35

That's the trick. That's intentional. Yes, we're going to hear a lot of noise in just a few seconds. We're headed out to our 80,000 square foot studio where all of our balloons, our floats, and all of the other theatrical elements are designed and made here at Macy's Studios. Let's go.

Jane 03:56

It is magical and it smells good.

Will Coss 03:58

It smells good. Yes, there's a variety of things that are happening right here. Right now, we're standing about 25 feet above our ground level, and this is an opportunity for us to look over the entire studio, which is broken up, similar to classrooms in different sections. So we have our animation and automation, which is essentially all of the things that move. We have our metal shop, which is all of our internal structure, so we call it the bones of each one of our floats. Then we have our carpentry section, which builds all of the beautiful elements around our floats. And then on the other side, over here, we have another very important department, which is our sculpting team.

Jane 04:45

I like, I can't even it's so cool to see there's a lot of styrofoam. There's some Styrofoam pieces that have been painted, and there's a giant float that has a bear and a moose that are being built on it right now.

Will Coss 04:59

Yes, so that giant bear and moose that you see started as one cube of Styrofoam, and our artists here at the studio take the designs that are started on a computer and transfer them to the beautiful, giant pieces of art that you see here.

Jane 05:20

We were perched high up on a balcony overlooking all the action. People using welding machines that shot sparks into the air. Other workers using belt sanders to smooth out big pieces of wood. Some people were sculpting those giant pieces of Styrofoam into recognizable characters, and still, others were spray painting that foam to make it water resistant and colorful. Will took us down onto the main floor to get up close and personal.

Will Coss 05:47

Watch your step, Everyone a little, slippery.

Jane 05:49

There was a lot to see, like puppets.

Will Coss 05:53

This puppet will be 12 feet tall, so it's going to be a giant puppet, and it will be controlled similar to traditional puppet, but instead of strings, it'll be metal wires that'll be connected to some motors to help us move and adjust the puppet along the parade route

Jane 06:12

To make everything for the parade. There are a lot of tools.

Will Coss 06:16

This is our carpentry shop, so similar to your woodworking stations and woodworking shops at school, maybe just a little bit bigger, because the things that we built are a little bit bigger, but all of the similar things you might have. We have our saws, we have our drills, we have our tables, our cutting tables, and this is where the carpenters and our carpentry team start all of their work and start to assemble pieces that then get put onto our floats.

Jane 06:49

Yeah, your class could probably have a dance party in here. It's a big space.

Will Coss 06:53

We actually have dance parties here too, but, yes, very big space. A lot of wood, a lot of saws, a lot of tools up on the board on the wall, and everything is very neatly organized here at the studio, we want to make sure we know where everything is so we actually have pictures of our tools on the wall that remind us where to return things when they're missing.

Jane 07:19

I love that. Yeah, it's like a almost like a sticker of the tool itself, so you know exactly what to put there. You don't even need to know the name of the tool. You just need to match the shape.

Will Coss 07:30

Yes, we like to keep it simple and easy.

Jane 07:31

Not everything is made by hand. Will showed us a giant tool called a CNC machine. CNC stands for Computer Numerical Control, and the machine is basically a robot that cuts wood. The people design the shapes they want, and then the computer can cut out those shapes precisely every time. All of this work in the carpentry shop and the welding area and the sculpting area eventually becomes a scene or a display that goes onto a float. Will walked us over to a float bed. Without anything on it a float bed is just a flat trailer that gets hitched onto a car or truck, but when the team builds a whole design on top of that flat bed, it becomes something really cool. But why is it called a float?

Will Coss 08:19

Call them floats because they give you the impression, or we try to pretend that there are these stages that are actually floating down the streets of New York City. We build them 30 feet tall, but also we cover the wheels with what we call skirts, which is essentially different types of fabric that float in the wind, and gives you the the impression that the floats are actually, literally floating down the street, but there's some wheels underneath there.

Jane 08:52

Now you have to make sure that they will fit on a street so they can't be too wide. And then some streets have power lines and other things. How do you make sure that they're not so tall, and how do you get them to New York City from where we are in New Jersey?

Will Coss 09:06

That is a great question. Each one of the floats that we design will fold down like a transformer to about nine feet by 12 feet. If you think about your school bus, everything in the parade folds down to about that size. And we take all of our floats from New Jersey through the Lincoln Tunnel, up the highway in New York City and up to Central Park, and that's where we reassemble everything. So we use giant cranes to pick up all of the pieces and put them back together, sort of like a Lego puzzle right on the streets the day before parade.

Jane 09:44

So if I was driving along through the Lincoln Tunnel with my family the day before Thanksgiving, I might just drive by this whole long line of folded up parade floats.

Will Coss 09:55

Yes, there's over 75 units that come from New Jersey all the way to New York City, and we're out in the streets, and everyone gives us a big wave and cheers us on. It's our own little mini parade before the parade.

Jane 10:09

That would be almost as fun as seeing a parade. Yes, yeah, absolutely. Next we headed over to the paint studio. Remember, all of these areas are in one giant, 80,000 square foot warehouse, you could fit my house that I live in into that space more than 50 times. So it's really big. That's how they can fit in all the various materials that are needed for a giant, three hour long parade.

Will Coss 10:35

We use over 2,000 gallons of paint every year for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, we have every color imaginable, and then our team of professional painters also custom mix colors to get the perfect shade depending on the project that we're working on. We have a team of painters who are painting different elements right now. This is sort of like a sunburst. It's going to be what we're calling a little bit of a dream catcher for one of our floats. So that'll have a couple of layers that will spin and give you this nice dreamy effect.

Jane 11:12

We are now in a sea of white foam. Hi, I'm Jane.

Cameron 11:18

My name is Cameron Carnevale, the lead sculptor here, and we are working on several projects, Pop Mart being one of them. That's what everyone's on right now, each doing an individual character. We've got a little bit of Netflix, Stranger Things.

Jane 11:37

This is the monster behind you.

Cameron 11:39

It's behind me, isn't it? Yes, it is, yes, all 10 feet tall of it.

Jane 11:45

How do you carve foam?

Cameron 11:47

We used a bunch of things, from kitchen knives to sort of a hot wire that will cut through the foam.

Jane 11:54

And then you have to coat it and paint it so that if it's a little bit rainy, it's not going to disintegrate. It'll stand up to any kind of weather.

Cameron 12:03

That's right. So it gets, we call it a candy coating, like an M & M on the soft shell, and, yeah, protects it from from everything, and it gets painted all pretty.

Jane 12:15

So if somebody ever dents one, are you like, Oh my God. Oh, that work!

Cameron 12:20

No, it's okay, because we can fix that. We can patch it up. Nope, no problem.

Jane 12:27

We wanted to get a better look at the monster behind Cami. It was a scary character from a TV show called Stranger Things that's very popular with adults and older teenagers.

Will Coss 12:37

So we're walking up to the Demogorgon, which our sculptor, Justin has expertly sculpted. He's 12 feet tall. And then we had to take it all apart, put all of the armatures, which are the pieces of metal, which is essentially like our bone, like our skeleton. We made a skeleton, and then we added the character back to it. And Justin, right now is putting all the pieces on it and putting all of the latex which will give it an actual realistic finish. So the legs will move up and down, the head will open and close. So after Justin

is done putting all of the latex finish on it. It'll go over to our paint team to become the actual puppet. It was designed to be.

Jane 13:25

Right? It's not going to look too scary or too real, it's just white styrofoam.

Will Coss 13:30

Yes, yeah. So we've talked a lot about floats and all of the work that goes into it. Now we're going to walk over to the other favorite part of our studio, which is our balloon studio, and that's where we make all of the giant character balloons that you see in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

Jane 13:50

That's right, we're going to be talking balloons next. This parade is perhaps most famous for the giant helium balloons that float high above the city streets as the parade marches through New York City. We're going to learn all about how they're made, and yes, answer your questions about balloons That's coming right up.

Jane 14:09

This is But Why. I'm Jane Lindholm, and today we're on a field trip behind the scenes at the creative studio in Moonachie, New Jersey, where artists, designers, carpenters, welders and a whole team of other people work year round to get ready for one of the biggest parades in the United States, the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. I love seeing how things are made, so I am always up for a factory tour. The Macy's Parade is really well known for having giant balloons that float through the streets. And when I say giant, I mean really, really giant. Some of the balloons in the almost 100 year history of this parade have been more than 100 feet tall or 100 feet long. Your school bus is maybe 35 or 40 feet long. So imagine how big those balloons are. We wanted to see how they are made and answer the questions you've sent us. So we asked our guide, Will Coss, executive producer of the parade, to take us inside the balloon making part of the warehouse.

Will Coss 15:09

Okay, so we're standing outside of two double doors that we're going to push through and see the wonderful balloon studio here at Macy's Studios.

Jane 15:19

You're making it sound very exciting.

Will Coss 15:23

Here we are.

Jane 15:23

And it is.

Will Coss 15:24

We are now in the iconic Macy's balloon studio, and in this facility, we design and we put together all of the pieces that make up every one of our balloons. Right now we have Super Mario.

Jane 15:41

So if you were standing here with me, you would see a giant head of Mario himself, but his nose is not inflated, and neither is his mustache.

Will Coss 15:51

Correct. Yes, we we inflate and deflate certain areas of the balloon to help us work on certain specific spaces. Right now we were painting the eyes, so we deflated the nose, and then we'll re inflate it once we're done,

Jane 16:09

I feel like he's staring at us.

Will Coss 16:11

Might be.

Jane 16:12

He's following us with his eyes. It's like the Mona Lisa. You know, while we're here in the balloon studio, we have a lot of questions about balloons, specifically including, how do you make balloons?

Molly 16:26

Hi, my name is Molly. I'm four years old. I'm from Henniker, New Hampshire, and I wanted to know how are balloons made.

Sage 16:35

My name is Sage, and I'm five years old, and I live in London, and my question is, how are balloons made?

Ari 16:49

My name is Ari. I am from Castleton, New York, and my question is, how do you make balloons?

Cora 17:01

Hello. My name is Cora, and I am six, and my question we're from Wisconsin, and my question is, how do you make balloons?

Jane 17:16

Basic ground party balloons that you blow up with your mouth are made in a factory where balloon molds are dipped into liquid latex that dries and gets rubberized and sometimes is stamped with designs. The metallic balloons that sometimes come in fun shapes and get filled up with helium are usually made with a material called mylar. They are made by having a front and a backside that are exactly the same shape, and then the two pieces are melted together and blown up. But the balloons

made for the Macy's Parade are so huge they have to be made by hand, one at a time, from a different material.

Will Coss 17:54

The Macy's balloons are made from a very special material that's designed specifically for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

Jane 18:02

And what is that material called? Or can you not tell me,

Will Coss 18:06

it's magic material for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade balloons.

Jane 18:10

That's code speak for I'm not going to tell you.

Will Coss 18:14

Yes, it's a special fabric that is proprietary or designed specifically for Macy's and our balloon fabrication.

Jane 18:22

So the fabric feels kind of like a tarp that you might put down over a lawnmower or on your picnic table, but maybe a little bit thicker,

Will Coss 18:33

Yes, and it has a similar sound when it crunches up together.

Jane 18:37

Well, it makes sense that you need your own kind of material, because you're making enormous balloons. If you've ever seen the parade, these are balloons that float high above. They look like they're floating in the sky, but they don't float away, because people hold on to them. But they are giant, way bigger than you or me, and they are made specifically to look like a special character or something famous that you know, like maybe Snoopy or Mario, and so they have to be able to have this material that can make something in that shape and size, and be able to withstand New York City, November, wind and rain and maybe snow.

Will Coss 19:16

Yes, the material is an important part of making these balloons and making them successfully. The size depends on the type of character that we're doing. Our largest balloon right now is Spider Man, which is almost 70 feet long, many.

Jane 19:32

How many school busses is that?

Will Coss 19:34

That's probably two school busses long, two and a half school busses long. Minnie Mouse is one of our tallest balloons at over 60 feet tall. So these are giant. When we say giant, they are giant. We're standing here next to Mario right now, and from the floor we just come up to about his ear, and that's his head. is the only thing that's inflated. So they're quite big. Some of our balloons have over 200 pieces that get melted together to make our giant balloons, and that's what the team over here is doing right now on the heat sealers.

Jane 20:06

The heat sealing machines look kind of like giant sewing machines, except instead of having a needle and thread to attach the various pieces of fabric, the heat sealing machine melts the pieces together.

Jen 20:19

My name is Jen, and I'm a balloon fabricator at the Macy's Parade studio.

Jane 20:23

You've got a ton of fabric here. It looks like you're making a dress for Cinderella or something.

Jen 20:27

It's not Cinderella, but I'm sure you guys do know who I'm making which I'm not sure if I can say I can. And it's Derpy from KPop Demon Hunter. So very exciting. I'm most pumped about this balloon. I know we're not supposed to pick favorites, but I might have one. And yes, I'm sitting at what's called a heat sealer. So we use really high heat to melt the pieces of the balloon together before we go and clean and paint it. So it's really exciting and quite fun.

Jane 20:55

How do you know where to melt the pieces together?

Jen 21:00

I have a really wonderful team here that works on the computer to mark out the pieces for us. So we have digital markings that allow us to match it up like, almost like a puzzle piece. And we attach the puzzle pieces together so that we get from hundreds and hundreds of little parts one big, awesome balloon.

Jane 21:17

And then on this fabric itself, there are lines and there are numbers, so you're following those directions when you're using your machine.

Jen 21:26

Absolutely. Thank goodness I learned how to count, because if not, we would not have a cat, but maybe some other animal. So yeah, we use a series of letters and numbers as codes to go ahead and build and we also have really fun little miniature models of the balloons that also help us put the pieces together. And I use it as a guide to ensure that I'm doing the right thing.

Jane 21:49

It looks like you're holding an arm.

Jen 21:50

It is. This is derpy's Sweet little arm, and we're currently working on building out his limbs. And last bit is his body. So we're moving along really well.

Jane 22:00

Every balloon starts out white and then gets painted by hand after it's all put together. The paint really brings the balloons to life and lets you know exactly what character is floating up there in the sky. And we got a question from one kid who feels like a certain favorite character is being unfairly overlooked by the parade.

Mary 22:19

My name is Mary. I live in UK. My question is, why didn't Minnie Mouse get brought out in the Macy's Parade, and why didn't Daisy Duck get brought out in the Macy's Parade? Because they're the boy's girlfriends.

Jane 22:38

Mary, I think, doesn't know that Minnie Mouse was debuted in the parade last year, I believe. So Minnie is here, but not Daisy.

Will Coss 22:46

Minnie is here. We were excited to bring Minnie to the parade last year. Every year, we try to find a collection of characters that are known and loved, and our team sits around a table and talks about all of the most exciting characters to include in any one parade, and last year was Minnie. We've got some special surprises this year.

Jane 23:06

Are there any that you can tell us about that we don't have to that we don't reveal until our episode comes out on November 14?

Will Coss 23:12

So we have Mario, who will be joining the parade this year. Shrek will be returning to the parade this year. We have Pac Man, who is a legendary video game character that we're really excited and be Pac Man's first time in the parade this year, and the one and only Buzz Lightyear will be returning to the parade this year, celebrating Toy Story. So super excited to see Buzz.

Jane 23:41

You talk about them like they're alive when you put them away after the parade, do you like say goodbye to them and tell them to have a nice sleep. Are you like see you next year or maybe in 10 years?

Will Coss 23:51

Yes, we do. We we treat all of our characters as our family. We spend a lot of time with all of our characters. So after parade, we do take great care and making sure that we fold them in a very specific way, and then we we store them in what we call our hampers. So if you think about your hamper at home, where you put your dirty laundry, a giant version of that is where all of our balloons get rolled up and folded into, we cover them, and then we store them at one of our storage facilities until the next parade.

Ezra 24:23

Hi, I am Ezra. I'm four years old. I live in Pittsburgh, and my question is, why do balloons float inside the sky?

Henry 24:37

Hi, my name is Henry, and I live in Los Angeles, California. I'm five and a half years old, and my question is, why do balloons float?

Tom 24:51

Hello. My name is Tom. I'm six years old. I live in Potomac, Maryland. My question is how do balloons float on air?

Becks 25:02

Hi, my name is Becks. I'm six years old, and I'm from Canada, Alberta. And my question is, why do balloons float, if gravity is pushing down?

Arthur 25:17

My name is Arthur. I am four years old. I live in Auckland, New Zealand. My question is, why do balloons float?

Tyler 25:25

Hi, my name is Tyler, and I'm five, and I live in Sunnyvale, California. And my question is, how do balloons float?

Gabby 25:36

How does the balloon stay up? My name is Gabby, five South Burlington.

Evelyn 25:43

Hi. I'm Evelyn from Hinesburg, Vermont, and I'm four, and I want to know how some balloons fly and some don't.

Tilda 25:52

My name is Tilda, and I'm seven years old, and I live in Sydney, Australia, and my question is, why do balloons float up with helium inside, but not without helium, like with your breath and things like that?

Riley 26:10

Hi. My name is Riley. I am nine years old, and I live in Auckland, New Zealand. My question is, why, when you blow up a balloon with air, it sinks to the bottom, but when you fill it up with helium, it floats?

Jane 26:23

What makes balloons float?

Will Coss 26:26

Our Macy's Parade balloons float because we put something called helium inside of the balloon. It's a gas that's lighter than air, so once we put enough of that helium, similar to your party balloons that you'll see on anyone's party or celebration. We just do them in a giant form. So there's a lot of helium, a lot of gas that goes into the balloon, which allows it to float up in the air. And then once we're done with the parade, we release the helium, we fold it back down, and we store them for the next parade.

Jane 26:58

And you said something very important, which is that helium is lighter than air, so the helium rises and the balloon is pretty light, even though it's big, so the balloon, which is holding all that helium in, rises along with that gas.

Will Coss 27:11

That's correct. Yes, they're actually heavier than we might think. They're a couple of 100 pounds, with all of the fabric and the paint. But at 70 feet long, we have a lot of space for helium, and once we fill that with helium, the balloons rise, and then our balloon handlers grab onto what we call bones and hold them and walk them down the parade route.

Jane 27:36

Yeah. Amelia wants to know about that.

Amelia 27:39

I'm eight years old, and I live in Portland, Oregon, and I have a question about the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. And my question is, how do those big balloons hold on just a tiny string?

Eleanor 27:51

Hi, my name is Eleanor. I'm four years old. I'm in California. My question is, how many people take to hold one float.

Jane 28:02

How are those big balloons held on such tiny strings? And Eleanor is wondering about how many people it takes.

Will Coss 28:11

We have over 90 tiny strings on any one giant balloon which covers the entirety of the character. And each one of those strings gets held by a person which walks the balloon down the parade route, and each one of the strings is fastened to the balloon itself in a very secure way. We actually design and engineer the balloon with a special material to reinforce the handle, what we call handling lines. So it's

if you think about a piece of clothing, and you've got a label stitched into the clothing, you've got a little design stitched in. It's sort of an extra layer of stitching that goes into these lines to make sure that they're strong enough to hold.

Jane 28:58

And I think you said some of the balloons have 90 of those strings. Are there 90 people on the ground holding each balloon?

Will Coss 29:05

There's at least 90 people on our giant balloons. Everyone holds one string, which is attached to a bone, which they'll hold in their hand. And in addition to the 90 people on our giant balloons, we actually have little carts that also help to keep it safe and secure on the ground.

Jane 29:25

Because otherwise it would float away.

Will Coss 29:27

Otherwise it could potentially float away if everyone released it. So if everyone, if there was big wind gusts, and everyone decided to let go, we still hold our balloons to the ground using what we call a vehicle patch.

Jane 29:40

You know, it's really interesting, because not only do you have people here who are artists and engineers and carpenters, but you also have to have people who understand things like weather and wind gusts, and not just, well, it's going to be cloudy and a little bit windy, but like, it's going to be cloudy and a little bit more windy on this part, or when we. Go around this building, you're going to get a wind gust, and you have to take that into account when you're building these things. And then on the day of the parade, you need to know, because you've got these huge balloons and floats and all of these things that really you need to be able to control with the weather conditions.

Will Coss 30:19

On each one of our balloons, we have what are called pilots and flight managers. So that's the team that walks out in front of the balloon to help us understand, okay, this corner is going to have a big cross wind, so we might want to bring the balloon down a little bit so we have a little bit more control over it.

Jane 30:37

So some people are talking constantly during the parade to each other to make sure it goes smoothly.

Will Coss 30:41

The entire team is talking. We encourage the team to continue to talk and to make sure that the people who are leading the balloon are communicating with all of the team that are holding the balloon so they know exactly how high to fly the balloon if they need to bring it down, if they need to move to one side of the street or the other side, depending on the weather.

Jane 30:59

Do they yell at each other, or do they have headsets? They yell?

Will Coss 31:04

We've tried headsets. We've tried a variety of communication devices. Just projecting and raising your voice seems to be the most effective way to get the get the communication across. So there's yelling, there's hand signals, there's also whistles that we use at certain points to help people understand where they need to be and where they need to move.

Jane 31:24

Can you tell us a whistle signal so that if we are ever watching the parade, we can interpret.

Will Coss 31:29

We use single whistles if we're raising a balloon or lowering the balloon, so you'll hear it. And that's one two, and that's how many essentially rotations we'll use to make a balloon go from the ground to 20 feet in the air, and then there's a three chirp whistle that'll be a stop signal.

Jane 31:53

What about turn left?

Will Coss 31:55

Turn left is just a hand signal.

Jane 31:57

So now you'll know if you ever overhear a whistle or a three chirp whistle what's about to happen with those big balloons. It's a massive undertaking to put this parade together. Will told us there are more than 5000 people who are part of the parade each year. There are lots of performers dancing and singing and playing instruments, plus all those people who hold the balloons or stand and wave on the floats. Will took us up to the third floor to look at the costume room, and it was massive, too, and filled with everything from bowling pin to cherry pie costumes to cupcakes to clouds with propellers to outfits that match the Spider Man balloon and on and on, rows and rows of costumes. Now it's not that easy to get a job in the parade. In order to be a balloon handler, for example, you have to meet certain height and weight requirements so that you're strong enough to hold down the balloon. Remember, it's filled with a lot of helium. And all the volunteers are people who work at Macy's, or are the friends and family members of people who work at Macy's. As for Will Coss, he's not holding a balloon or marching in the parade during the event itself. He's in a TV production truck.

Will Coss 33:08

Which is where the producers, the director and all of our technical crew look at all the cameras and select all of the different shots that you see on your television screen.

Jane 33:18

So you might be telling a camera operator. Quick, go down and show one of the handlers. They look great in their costume, and they're holding that bone and that string really well. So quick, let's get a shot of them. Now, zoom up and let's see the face of Mario, because his mustache and his nose is inflated now.

Will Coss 33:36

Exactly, exactly, yes.

Jane 33:39

What's your favorite part of the parade?

Will Coss 33:41

My favorite part of the parade has to be what we call step off, which is the moment we say 3-2-1, confetti blows, and it's the official start to the parade. There's just an excitement and an energy up on the Upper West Side. We've spent the last 18 to 24 months building to that moment, and it's the moment where we officially start the parade and begin the celebration for all of New York City in America.

Jane 34:09

I bet that is a pretty exciting moment for the thousands of people in the parade, not to mention the millions who are watching. For many people watching the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade is an annual tradition. What traditions do you have during the holidays that make you feel happy and connected to your family or your community? For me, on Thanksgiving, I like to gather with my aunts and uncles and cousins and all of their kids in Maine for a big family get together. Some of us like to run in a race in the morning called a turkey trot, and we all like to contribute to making the meal that we share in the afternoon. If you celebrate Thanksgiving, I hope you have a good one. Thanks to Christine Nealon and Will Coss at Macy's for helping us understand all the stuff that goes into making the Thanksgiving Day Parade. I always love a chance to get behind the scenes at some place cool and learn about all the work that goes into it and all the different kinds of people who have jobs making interesting things. That's it for today. Our show is produced by Sarah Baik, Melody Bodette and me, Jane Lindholm at Vermont Public and distributed by PRX. Our theme music is by Luke Reynolds. Joey Palumbo is our video producer, and you can see a lot of what we talked about in this episode on our But Why Kids YouTube channel. If you like our show, please have your adults help you give us a thumbs up or a review on whatever app you use to listen to us. And as always, send us your questions about whatever makes you curious. Have an adult record you and then send the file to questions@butwhykids.org We'll be back in two weeks with an all new episode until then, stay curious.