



900 Fifth Street  
International Falls MN 56649  
(218) 285-7225  
www.backusab.org

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*“Historic Backus Community Center, the heart of International Falls, where all generations celebrate arts, culture, recreation, wellness and life-long learning.”*

Online at [www.backusab.org](http://www.backusab.org)  
On Facebook: **BackusAB**

## Upcoming Events

**Community Café**  
Every Tuesday & Thursday  
5:30 pm to 6:00 pm

### December

- Koochiching Aging Options Logging Camp Christmas  
December 2 - 5:30 pm
- Breakfast with Santa  
December 10 - 9 to 11 am
- Falls High Band & Choir Concert  
December 11 - 3 pm
- Ruby's Pantry  
December 12 - 5:00 to 6:30pm
- St. Thomas Christmas Program  
December 13 - 6:30 pm

### January

- Ruby's Pantry  
January 9 - 5:00-6:30 pm

- Icebox Days Pasta Dinner  
January 20 - 5:00 - 6:30 pm
- Blind Joe Concert  
January 20 - 7:00 pm
- Icebox Days Runners Reception  
January 21 - 12:30 - 2:00 pm
- Icebox Days Chili Challenge  
January 21 - 1:00 - 3:00 pm
- Icebox Days Turkey Bowling  
January 21 - 1:00 - 3:00 pm
- WordPow! Workshop  
January 24-26 - 6:30-9:00 pm
- On Edge Film Festival  
January 26 - 6:30 pm
- Arrowhead 135 Ultra Marathon Spaghetti Feed  
January 29 - 5:00 pm

### February

- James Sewell Ballet “Band It”  
February 4 - 7:00 pm
- All School Music Festival  
February 8 - 12:45 pm
- Backus Annual Meeting  
February 9 - 5 pm
- Border Concert— Jung Trio  
February 10 -
- Ruby's Pantry  
February 13 - 5:00 - 6:30 pm
- Contractor Class  
February 20 - 8:00 am
- Borderland Choral Fest  
February 22 - 1:30 pm
- Vietnamese New Year Dinner  
February 25 - 6:00 pm
- Ethnic Food Festival  
February 27 - 5:30 - 7:00 pm



“A Place Where All Things are Possible”

### In This Issue:

- Ice Box Days Events at Backus
- Santa is coming to Backus
- Performing Arts Series Remaining Performances
- Backus Flashback
- Backus Bite
- What does Backus Mean to You?
- End of the Year Giving

Backus would like to thank all of its Members. Your continued support helps to serve people of all ages, stages and wages in the Borderland.

Find out how to become a member on page 6!

# Backus Broadcasts

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 3

DECEMBER 2016



## Seasons Greetings



### From the Director's Desk:

As I write this message it's Tuesday, November 15. The afternoon weather is sunny. The temperature is 52 degrees and the forecast is for colder weather as the week progresses with “heavy snow” on Friday; a temp of only 33 and an overnight low of 20 degrees. By the time you read this winter will likely be upon us.

Here at Backus we are preparing not only for winter – but the future also. Our two massive 1,800 gallon, low pressure steam boilers have been serviced by a crew of expert volunteers headed by John Faith. Assembled in the basement of the AB School, the date “1912” is cast into the front plates of each boiler; their longevity, and excellent working order a marvel to the MN state boiler inspector every year. The boilers have worked faithfully for 104 years now – beginning with the presidency of William Howard Taft, extending through World War I, the Great Depression, New Deal, FDR, the film debut of such classics as “Gone with the Wind,” “The Wizard of Oz.” and “The Godfather” and into the Twenty-First Century. The massive boiler system was so reliable and powerful that steam lines were extended into Backus in 1936 and into the Forestland School in 1947. With the heating system in good working for another winter we've also made provision for snow removal, checked oil in our snowblower and serviced the roof-top heating units for the third floor. A committee is planning a “Breakfast with Santa” and a float is being constructed for the post-Thanksgiving Holiday Parade.

All this goes on but also with an eye to the future. Already one strategic planning session has been held with our facilitator gathering input from twenty-five community “stakeholders.” That input has been shared with nine staff and thirteen board members. Myrna Meadows has conducted two board workshops on “the Evolution of Nonprofit Boards” and two more planning sessions will take place in November. In December and January a new Backus strategic plan will be drafted for 2017-2020. The new plan will be the fifth since Citizens for Backus/AB were incorporated in 2002.

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## From the Director's Desk cont.

*Board of Directors*  
 Sherrie Lessard,  
 President  
 Beth Lowthian,  
 Vice President  
 Tracy Lunser,  
 Secretary  
 David McKee,  
 Treasurer  
*Board Members*  
 Barb Albert, Emeritus  
 Kay Arnold  
 Patti Ballan  
 Julie Bartkowski  
 John Faith  
 Donna Frederickson,  
 Emeritus  
 Shelby Harmening  
 Beth Nelson  
 Gail Rognerud  
 Tim Wegner  
*Executive Director*  
 Ward Merrill  
*Business Manager*  
 Hoa Sobczynski  
*Event Coordinator*  
 Robin Bjorkquist  
*Marketing*  
 Julia Herbert  
*Event Staff*  
 Jill Malone  
 June Wilson  
*Kitchen Supervisor*  
 Mary Ann Lien  
*Cooks*  
 Rick DeBenedet  
 Wanda Linder  
*Custodians*  
 Joe Kenny  
 Jerry Vohler

What does the “future” hold for Backus? The Backus building is currently at full occupancy with eighteen tenants now leasing space. The board is considering plans to open up several small office spaces on first floor previously inaccessible. Preliminary work is moving ahead to make the Alexander Baker ready for development – a hazardous materials survey has been conducted and asbestos will be removed from the building in the next several months. Food access programs such as Community Café and Ruby’s Pantry continue to meet serious community needs. 5,357 guests have benefited from Ruby’s and over 65,700 free meals have been served to children and adults through the Summer Food Service Program and Community Café. Backus partners with the Falls Hunger Coalition on all three food/meal programs.

After a resounding success with “The Wizard of Oz” the Borealis Bards community theatre troupe is looking forward to a number of creative performances in the New Year. The Junior Bards present an evening of one-act plays, “Room to Act” dinner theatre returns with “Take 3” and the second “Adults Only” comedy entertains those 18 and up on April 29.

During Ice Box Days Backus will host an encore performance by “Blind Joe” Bombersbach on Friday, January 20. We present three more performances in our “Performing Arts Series” beginning on February 4 with The James Sewell Ballet’s “Band It”, “Hard Travelin’ with Woody” on March 4 and Celtic music and dancers with Ring of Kerry on April 1.

As we enter the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons we at Backus are thankful for the continued level of volunteer and financial support we receive from our community. We’re also appreciative of the many community partners that help us provide a variety of opportunities for citizens of all ages. County-wide schools have been receptive when Backus can bring visiting artists/performers to present outreach programs for students. The Falls Hunger Coalition continues to be a generous partner in our joint food access programs. Koochiching County helps support the 4-H programs in our building and Community Café. The City of International Falls also supplies significant annual support. A new benchmark of 417 Backus memberships in 2015 provided not only financial support but also helped demonstrate to funders the level of commitment from the community. Almost 600 volunteers contributed 9,000 hours of service and we estimate over 45,000 citizens will have accessed our building this year. We hope Backus continues to impact the lives of people in our area in a multitude of positive ways.

Backus strives to give life to its mission statement: “Historic Backus Community Center, the heart of International Falls, where all generations celebrate arts, culture, recreation, wellness and life-long learning.”

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## What does Backus Mean to You?

Community Members Answer the Question “How Backus Community Center is making a difference in our community or in your life?”

**Kevin Grover – Superintendent ISD #361, International Falls Public Schools**

“I can honestly say I am a believer in this group and facility. In my honest opinion, I was not an original supporter of saving this building. Years later I am a supporter and do not know where our community would be without this venue and the group that runs it. They have not only resurrected a facility, but have added to this community culturally and educationally. It has been a journey that has brought young and old together to experience history along with pushing forward to enrich all of our lives with ongoing social activities.”

**Cynthia Jaksa - City Councilor, City of International Falls**

“Without Backus and its volunteers...there would be no community center here. The city alone does not have the capacity to support a community center. Why is a community center important? A reiteration of all the activities that happen there, from caring for children to housing teen programs to cultural events staged at the Backus Auditorium makes the case.”

“They have not only resurrected a facility, but have added to this community culturally and educationally.”

## ‘Tis the Season of Giving



Please think of Citizens for Backus/AB for any “end of the year” charitable contributions you may be considering. Your donations are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. Citizens for Backus/AB is an IRS 501-c-3 non-profit corporation and your donations help support programming, planning, grant-writing, maintenance and preservation of both the Backus and Alexander Baker Buildings.

Seat memorials or honorariums make great Christmas gifts! \$100 buys a seat for a year, \$500 buys a seat for 10 years, \$1,000 buys a seat for Backus’ lifetime!

“WISHING YOU AND YOUR FAMILY A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!”

FROM THE BACKUS BOARD AND STAFF





## Backus Flashback

The Citizens for Backus/AB are coming up on 15 years since they took over the Backus and AB buildings from the School district. In 2002 the International Falls School Board voted to sell the Backus and AB buildings to the dedicated group of individuals who fought to keep the buildings from being demolished.

Citizens of Backus/AB when the original vote by the school board allowed for sale of the Backus & AB buildings.

Photo from The Journal



### NOT A MEMBER YET?

Stop into the office at 900 5th Street or go Online to [www.bakusab.org](http://www.bakusab.org) Memberships start at just \$60.

Members get 10% discount on room rentals, Invitation to the annual meeting/dinner each February, "Member's Only" events, and helping Backus to feed the hungry, encourage arts & expression, support local school and sporting events and restore the buildings.

## From the Director's Desk cont.

Please continue to support this mission through your membership, volunteering or by attending events. I would invite you to encourage others to join in that support also.

All of us at Backus wish everyone the best during this holiday season.

*WARD* Ward Merrill, Executive Director

## WordPow!

Beginning in January 2017, Backus Community Center will join with WordPow! *writing that empowers* to add expressive writing workshops to its growing list of opportunities in the arts. Kate Miller, WordPow! founder and writing coach, has held workshops in various locations around the community over the past year, including the Backus board room. Now Miller's *Write Your Way* workshops will make their home here.

In conversations with Executive Director Ward Merrill and the Backus board, Kate has expressed enthusiasm for extending WordPow's outreach, as well as for the opportunity to offer WordPow! workshops at a modest cost in the familiar, welcoming location that Backus provides. "Participants in the previous workshops have felt at home at Backus," Kate said, "and the board room provides an ideal combination of comfort, privacy, and conducive environment for new writing and open conversation."

Executive Director Merrill looks forward to providing this opportunity for creative expression and community engagement through writing, a medium that is accessible to nearly everyone. He feels that WordPow!'s invitation to "connect, reflect, imagine and transform through writing" fits well under the Backus/AB mission and the widening umbrella of programs Backus offers.

*Write Your Way*, a 3-session workshop open to people of all ages and writing abilities, will launch the new season January 24-26, 6:30-9:00 pm. The workshop focuses on personal expression in the writer's authentic voice, rather than on craft or specific forms. Participants are encouraged to silence their inner critics and write freely from prompts or writing exercise suggestions. All are invited to read their work and receive support and appreciation from the group, though sharing is never required.

Preregistration and payment of the \$45 fee will reserve a space in the workshop (maximum 15 participants). The price includes all three sessions, materials, and coffee break. You can register on-line at [www.bakusab.org](http://www.bakusab.org), or call the Backus Community Center office at 218-285-7225.

For more information, contact Kate Miller at 218-324-2774, [writeyourway@wordpow.org](mailto:writeyourway@wordpow.org), or [www.wordpow.org](http://www.wordpow.org).

## The Backus Bite



Recipe from Rick DeBenedet Backus Cook

### Ingredients:

- 1/2 yellow onion
- 1 TBS garlic
- 2 TBS olive oil
- 1-1/2 cups of aborio rice
- 1 cup of vegetable stock (vegetarian) or chicken stock
- 1/2 cup of white wine (optional)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 3 colored peppers
- 6 cups of water
- 1/2 cup parmesan cheese

### Directions:

Slice peppers into straps and set aside  
Dice onion and add to large skillet on medium low heat with 2 TBS of olive oil  
When onions have wilted, add garlic and simmer for a couple of minutes, turn up heat to medium, add rice and let brown for a few minutes.  
Meanwhile heat up six cups of water on small burner. Add stock and wine to rice and onion mixture. Add peppers and heat to a simmer allowing stock to almost evaporate, stirring constantly to keep rice from burning. At this point you have to be vigilant while you add water and stir for about 25 minutes until rice is done and no water is left and rice is thick Add parmesan cheese and remove from heat. Enjoy

# Santa Claus is coming to Backus

Saturday, December 10th | 9 - 11 am  
Backus Dining Room

## Come have breakfast with Santa.

Pancakes, meat, juice and coffee  
\$5 individuals | \$20 Family up to 6

Proceeds will benefit Backus Programming

- ~ Bring your camera to take a picture with Santa
- ~ Play reindeer games
- ~ Christmas crafts



## WordPow! Writing Workshop

Write Your Way, a 3-session workshop open to people of all ages and writing abilities, will take place **January 24-26, 6:30-9:00 pm.** The workshop focuses on personal expression in the writer's authentic voice, rather than on craft or specific forms.

Preregistration and payment of the \$45 fee will reserve a space in the workshop (maximum 15 participants). The price includes all three sessions, materials, and coffee break. You can register on-line at [backusab.org](http://backusab.org), or call the Backus office at 218-285-7225.

# Remaining Performances of the 2016-2017 Performing Arts Series

## JAMES SEWELL BALLET "BAND IT" FEBRUARY 4, 2017 @ 7:00 PM



This is a unique ballet performance compared to contemporary ballet. The performance is set to the driving rhythms of American band music and incorporates hover boards, color guard flags, and giant inflatable water balls. The performance was commissioned by the Wenger Foundation in honor of Harry Wenger.

## RING OF KERRY APRIL 1, 2017 @ 7:00 PM



This high energy Irish music group plays its Celtic music with a heart closer to its American home. The five musicians all sing and playing several instruments. The group's specialty is playing highly energetic and engaging stage shows that include a troupe of fully costumed Irish dancers.

## ICEBOX DAYS EVENTS AT BACKUS

### Friday, January 20th | 5:00 to 6:30 pm | Pasta Dinner

Will include pasta with sauce, salad, dinner roll and a cookie. Cost is \$9.00 per person, food will be served in the Backus Dining Room.

### Friday, January 20th | 7:00 pm | Blind Joe Concert

Blind Joe is back in the borderland, join us for a concert to kick off Icebox Days. Tickets are \$12 for Adults, \$25 for Family, \$6 for Students, Pre-K Free.

### Saturday, January 21st | 12:00 pm | Freeze Yer Gizzard Blizzard Run Awards Ceremony followed by a Runners Reception

Taking place on the Backus stage to honor the bold who run the cold.

### Saturday, January 21st | 1:00 to 2:30 pm | Chili Challenge

To eat cost is \$6 per person, Pre-K Free and includes chili, toppings and beverage, in the Backus Dining Room. To enter the contest contact Backus at 218-285-7225.

### Saturday, January 21st | 1:00 to 2:30 pm | Turkey Bowling

Join us to participate in the famous frozen turkey bowling, this event is free.

## "HARD TRAVELIN' WITH WOODY" BY RANDY NOOJIN MARCH 4, 2017 @ 7:00 PM



This one-man multimedia play includes the music and artworks of Woody Guthrie, one of America's iconic folksingers. Hop a box car through the Dustbowl with Woody, the saint-of-the-workingman and poet-of-the-people.

### Thank you to our sponsors:

Boise Paper Holdings, L.L.C., David McKee & Lynn Naeckel, Bremer Bank, Wagner Constructions, Stewart's Super One Foods, Jim & Sherrie Lessard, The Family of Karen (Turnquist) Johnson, City Drug, Cynthia Jaksa, Ward & Linda Merrill, Ballan Furniture, Border State Bank, Solutions Insurance Agencies, Waschke Family GM Center.



THESE PERFORMANCES ARE MADE POSSIBLE BY THE VOTERS OF MINNESOTA THROUGH A GRANT FROM THE MINNESOTA STATE ARTS BOARD, THANKS TO A LEGISLATIVE APPROPRIATION FROM THE ART AND CULTURAL HERITAGE FUND.



Individual Show Tickets: Adults: \$12 | Family: \$25 | Students: \$6 | Pre-K: Free.  
Individual show tickets will be sold at Backus Community Center, City Drug, J&D Family Foods in Littlefork and Betty's in Fort Frances and at the door.