

I volunteer for Backus and have found great personal fulfillment working during the summer months for the lunch program and also as an usher and ticket seller at events throughout the year. . . It has been affirming to work again with the public and to do meaningful work outside the home. Jill Malone, Backus volunteer, senior

Backus Broadcasts

Backus Community Center | 900 5th Street | International Falls, MN

Ruby's Pantry to set up shop in International Falls

From THE JOURNAL
By Emily Gedde,
Staff Writer

A semi truck delivering thousands of pounds of food to Backus Community Center every month is both exciting and a bit nerve-racking for Ward Merrill.

The executive director of the community center this week announced Backus has officially taken on the role of sponsoring Ruby's Pantry, a non-profit organization that procures and distributes corporate surplus food and goods to help fight poverty, hunger and disease in rural communities.

"This is going to be great for the community," Merrill said. "I cannot wait to get it started... Ruby's Pan-

try believes the best place to store food is in people's stomachs. I couldn't agree more."

On the second Monday of each month starting July 13, anyone in the community can take advantage of Ruby's Pantry from 5-6:30 p.m. For a donation of \$20, program participants are entitled to one share of food. A share consists of two boxes of food which can be in the form of two totes, laundry baskets, or coolers.

ter. There are no income guidelines."

What a waste

In the U.S., 40 percent of the food produced every year is wasted. That carries an annual price tag of about \$165 billion that goes right in the garbage. Ruby's Pantry has for more than 10 years attempted to play a part in the solution to the problem. The organization collects surplus foods from big-time food manufacturers and distributes it to 56

sites in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Mary Deneffe, who works

at the local Hardwig House, visited the distribution location in Cook earlier this year and thought a site in International Falls was something the community could benefit from.

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Ruby's Pantry

"If you eat food in your home, you're eligible for Ruby's Pantry," Merrill said. "It is for everyone. You can be the richest person in town or the poorest person in town. It doesn't mat-

Ruby's Pantry Continued

"She was really impressed with the operation and the people she brought with her were, too," Merrill said of Deneffe.

Inspired to make a difference, Deneffe approached Merrill with the idea and it didn't take long to convince him to jump on board. Backus has been a longtime hub to provide food insecurity services to the community through programs like the Community Cafe and summer food service program and Merrill wondered if there was room for more. He invited Deneffe to present some of her ideas to the Community Cafe steering committee for additional feedback.

"That committee is made up of folks from the Falls Hunger Coalition, Friends Against Abuse and Backus," Merrill said. "The idea of bringing Ruby's Pantry to International

Falls excited everyone right off the bat."

Getting started

Contact was made with Ruby's Pantry officials, and slowly, the idea began shaping into a reality.

Lyn Sahr, the director of the organization, came to International Falls and determined if a local sponsor stepped forward, Borderland could have a distribution site. Last week, the Backus Board of Directors gave the OK for the community center to play host as the site.

"A lot of work has to be done between now and July 13," Merrill said.

But the effort won't be successful without the community's help. In order for the distribution to operate smoothly,

50-75 volunteers are needed for a variety of jobs. A training session will be held from 5-7 pm. June 22 at Backus for interested volunteers. Members of a yet-to-be-established leadership team will have training from 3-5 p.m. the same day.

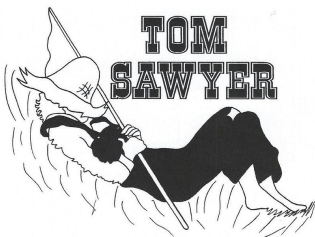
"We can't do this without volunteers," Merrill said. "We really need folks to step up and help us out...This is only a four-hour commitment once a month and it has the opportunity to make a big difference in this community."



If you would like to volunteer for Ruby's Pantry, please contact Karina McLellan at 218-290-3929

Summer Art Offers Classes and Theatre

The annual summer art week at Backus Community Center is June 15 through June 20.



Prairie Fire Children's Theatre will be performing "Tom Sawyer" A true slice of Americana, complete with crooks, chases and buried treasure.

All children ages 7-18 who audition will have a part in the production.

Art classes are mornings (10am-12pm) and afternoons (12:30-2:30pm) and include:

- Botanical Remedies
- Write It!
- Music & Lighting Design
- Acrylic Painting
- UPcycling! (2 age levels)

- Yoga (3 age levels)
- Project Wild
- Fiber Arts
- Fabulous Fashion

For more information, go online at www.backusab.org or stop by the office to pick up a brochure and registration. Class sizes are limited.

Scholarships are available.

Community Market Opens June 10

Backus is excited to be in our second year of accepting electronic payments at Community Market this summer.

Customers can purchase tokens in \$5 increments via credit or debit card, to be used to make purchases from market vendors.

SNAP cards can be used to purchase tokens in increments of \$1. Eligible food items for the SNAP program include:

- Preserved & fresh fruits, vegetables & herbs
- Meat, dairy, eggs
- Baked & canned goods
- Seeds & plants that bear fruits, vegetables or herbs

Items that **CANNOT** be purchased using SNAP include:

- Items intended for immediate consumption (coffee or prepared hot foods)
- Non-food items (crafts, clothes, flowers)
- Produce intended for decoration (gourds, carving pumpkins)

INCENTIVE PROGRAM:

Customers using a SNAP card to purchase tokens will receive \$1 Market Bucks for every \$1 purchased, up to \$5 match. \$5 = \$10 to spend!

Falls Hunger Coalition Pro-



grams include Senior Select and Bonus Bucks.

\$1 token = \$1 food/produce

Backus staff have worked diligently with the State of Minnesota to make these programs available to our community.

The advantage is making it easier for all persons to be able to purchase healthy, fresh products on a regular basis, as well as supporting local growers.

If you would like to be a Community Market Vendor, registration forms can be found online at www.backusab.org or call Hoa at (218) 285-7225. Community Market runs through October 10.

Testimonials

Job lay-offs, loss of businesses, and a smaller population have put a damper on progress in International Falls. However, we do have a bright spot in our far-north community – Backus! Backus has something for everyone and is the spot to go for a little culture in our small town. I also like to pass the billboard outside the building and see something new happening at Backus. They are doing things! It gives me a positive feeling about International Falls and the future. I've heard people say around town, "Well, thank God for Backus!" I couldn't agree more.

Dick Peterson – life-long resident, retired businessman

I think it's important to have Backus because without it we would not have a court or a really good team because this is where we practice and learn new things, so without it, our team would be nothing – so thank you for providing it for us.

Armando Barrios – basketball player – age 14

Backus has made a significant advancement in uniting our community by making available programs of interest for individuals of all age levels.

Barb Albert – retired teacher, Backus volunteer and former Backus Board member



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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.”*

Find us online!
www.backusab.org

Upcoming Events

- **June 8** Summer Food, Open Gym, Kids Club start
- **June 10** Community Market Starts
- **June 15-20** Prairie Fire Children's Theater & Backus Summer Arts Week
- **July 13** Ruby's Pantry Food Distribution
- **August 8** Backus Rainy Lake Triathlon
- **August 10** Ruby's Pantry Food Distribution
- **September 26** The Rose Ensemble
- **October 1** Border Concert: The Four Freshmen
- **October 17-18** Borealis Bards "Alice in Wonderland"
- **October 19** Ruby's Pantry Food Distribution
- **October 23** Chris Koza & Rogue Valley
- **October 31** Treat Street & Haunted House
- **November 9** Ruby's Pantry Food Distribution
- **November 13** Border Concert: Roy & Rosemary
- **December 14** Ruby's Pantry Food Distribution
- **December 15** St. Thomas Christmas Program
- **January 11** Ruby's Pantry Food Distribution
- **January 16** Icebox Days Chili Challenge
- **January 24** Arrowhead 135 Ultra Marathon
- **January 30** Border Concert: Alaskan Odyssey
- **February 5** Sisters: Positive energy, laughter, great music and motivating messages
- **February 8** Ruby's Pantry Food Distribution
- **February 19** Baby Boomer Comedy
- **February 20** TET Vietnamese New Year Dinner
- **March 4** Charlie Parr: Heartfelt & plaintive original folk blues
- **March 14** Ruby's Pantry Food Distribution
- **March 18** Ethnic Food Festival
- **April 16** Bill & Kate Isles: Acoustic singer/songwriter duo

Dates Subject to Change

For more details and updates, visit

www.backusab.org

Or stop by the office at 900 5th Street