

BACKUS Community Center

Volume 12 , Issue 3

October 2020

From the Director's Desk

As I write this, it's late October, a chilly fall day, trees are looking bare and snow mixes with fallen leaves along Riverside Drive. The presidential election will take place shortly; the COVID-19 pandemic has taken over 220,000 lives, showing no sign of ending soon; and the future is uncertain for all of us.



The future for Backus/AB looks a bit more secure in spite of the health crisis.

- On September 17 the Backus Board of Directors announced Lois Lundin as the new Executive Director effective January 1, 2021, ensuring the organization will be headed by an extremely capable, dedicated and passionate leader into the future.
- Two new office staff were hired in September. Judy Medeiros as Event Coordinator, and Alyssa Crawford as Office Assistant will provide solid support for our administrative team. Hoa Sobczynski continues to provide professional expertise as the Backus Business Manager. The Backus maintenance and custodial staff, Jerry Vohler and Joe Kenny, have maintained the building in pristine condition.
- Our kitchen staff has gone above and beyond helping set impressive records for our food service. The Summer Food Service Program was anchored by Cherie Sweney and Lenard Bobst. Backus staff members and volunteers Mary Ann Lien, Jill Malone, June Wilson, Julie Ehrman, Vera Vasilyev, Linda Sutch, and Bob Marquardt stepped into action to provide 9,072 “pick up” meals for area children. 1,022 of those meals were served to clients of the Falls Hunger Coalition and Servants of Shelter. Overall, the program saw a 62% increase over 2019.
- The Community Café has seen explosive growth during the pandemic beginning in mid-March with a change to “pick-up” meals. To date, the Backus team of staff and volunteers has served over 12,000 meals in just over nine months. The Backus cooks, Rick DeBenedet, Wanda Linder, and Lenard Bobst have done exceptional work.
- A Consolidated Application was submitted to the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency in July seeking housing tax credits that would fund over 70% of the Alexander Baker adaptive reuse project for affordable housing. The balance of funding would be provided by State/Federal Historic Tax Credits. Having made it through the first round of cuts, we hope for a positive decision in November. When completed, AB will be the first multi-family housing project in International Falls in almost four decades!
- We officially welcomed our good friends at the Falls Hunger Coalition to Backus in October! The Falls Hunger Coalition and Backus enjoy a strong 10-year relationship focused on our meal programs. FHC supports both the Community Café and Summer Lunch Program financially and by providing weekend snack packs for kids in the summer. Both groups work together to support Ruby's Pantry and are currently exploring ways to extend our food services in the county. Having first floor space in Backus will allow the FHC to better serve clients. We look forward to working with Executive Director Ashley Hall and FHC Assistant, Christina Daniel.
- Due to massive increased food costs for meal programs, the pandemic, and an unexpected shortfall in funding from a major funder, grant-writing has increased significantly. In an average year, Backus submits 8-9 grant applications. Since January 1, we've submitted 20 applications, which have all been funded.

With my retirement as Executive Director fast approaching on December 31, I end a 13 year job that I refer to as “the best job I've ever had.” It's been the highlight of my working career to return to my birthplace, my “hometown”, purchase my grandparent's home, and work to help preserve and repurpose two beautiful historic buildings. I've worked with the best co-workers one could hope for, and worked with a board of directors that is passionate about Backus/AB and supportive of our staff and mission. Backus volunteers, members, donors, local businesses, other non-profits and local government have been supportive. Citizens often share their appreciation for Backus and all that happens here. “I'm sure glad they saved Backus” and “What would we do without Backus” are two comments we hear often. I will always be grateful to those inspired and dedicated citizens who, twenty years ago, stepped up and worked so hard in the face of local opposition to save the Backus and AB Schools from demolition. “Civic vandalism” is a term that's been applied to the loss of historic buildings. It's the responsibility of all of us to make sure these two treasured buildings remain part of the landscape of International Falls—as a community center and, soon, as a quality home for thirty families in the Alexander Baker School.

Thank you!
Ward Merrill, Executive Director



New faces at Backus



Alyssa Crawford, Office Assistant

“Backus has always been the epicenter of fun, from attending preschool as a child to sporting events, concerts, and plays it has always been a great place to be. It is so fulfilling to work in a building with so much history and character, but to help put it all together makes it even better. I am honored to be given the opportunity to work with the amazing staff and volunteers that make our community a better place!”



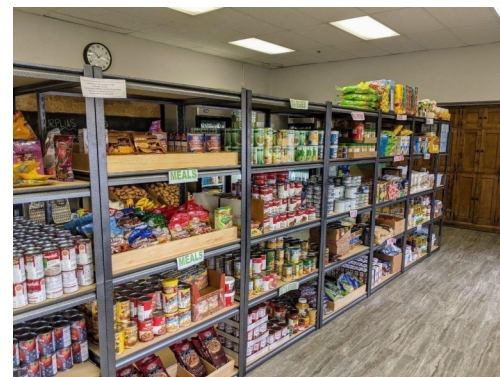
Judy Medeiros, Event Coordinator

“I really look forward to working with all the wonderful staff and volunteers that make Backus such an important part of our community. I am honored to be a part of something that will change people's lives. From meals offered by our Community Cafe to concerts and other live events in our historic auditorium, there is always something for everyone. I'm excited to have the opportunity to bring enriching programs and events to our community!”

Falls Hunger Coalition moves to Backus

Backus extends a warm welcome to the Falls Hunger Coalition! The new flooring is in and there is a fresh coat of paint on the walls. Volunteers worked to help the FHC team get settled, and the doors are open for business.

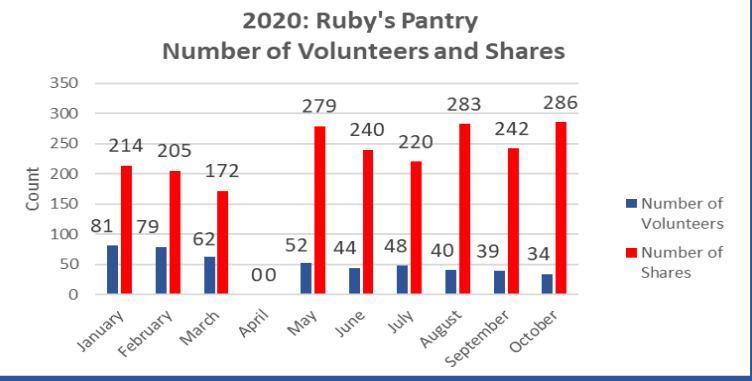
“Falls Hunger Coalition is so incredibly happy to now be located in the Backus Community Center. We can't thank Hoa, Ward, and Lois enough for their dedication to making this relocation happen. We are so thrilled for what the future holds.” ~Ashley Hall– FHC Executive Director





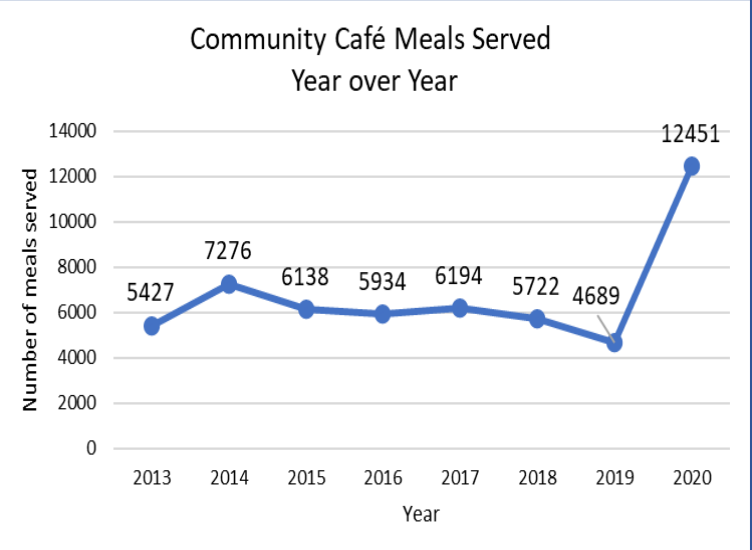
Ruby's Pantry is going strong

Although cancelled in April, our **Ruby's Pantry** distribution process was re-vamped as a "drive-thru" service and continues to serve many families each month. The new drive-thru system focuses on health safety for guests and volunteers and operates with greater efficiency. All COVID health protocols are actively in place. \$2 of every \$20 share donation is earmarked for local benevolence. To date, \$29,525 has been donated to area charities and non-profits across Koochiching County.



Community Café News

On March 16, 2020, Backus suspended all regular programs, events, and concerts. The only program deemed "essential" was **Community Café**. Community Café serves teenagers, families, college students, and elderly — anyone living in Koochiching County. Prior to COVID-19, Community Café served an average of 50 meals per night on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the dining room. The need for Café meals exploded as the health crisis grew. Reorganized as a "pick-up" service, the Café now averages 240 meals per night with our highest reaching 285 meals. Our menu has been enhanced to provide more homestyle foods and also includes fresh fruits and vegetables and milk with every meal. As of October 22, 2020, Backus has served 12,451 meals, making this our highest year since the Café began in 2012.



This bird's eye view shows a beautifully planned square foot garden, designed and tended to by our very own Rick DeBenedet! Backus staff and neighbors passing by contributed to weeding, watering, and thinning the plants. Children from the summer food program were frequently seen tip-toeing around on the garden stones and paths. The small garden plots produced many vegetables and was a place for everyone to enjoy over the course of this past summer. People learned about pole beans, kale, and how brussels sprouts grow. There were pea pods a-plenty and extraordinary cucumbers growing on the chain link fence line. It was a great year for tomatoes of all varieties. The petunias, marigolds, and geraniums all enjoyed their place in the sun, too. It seems that the more compliments it received, the better the garden grew!

Plans are underway for next spring's planting. Everyone is encouraged to join us in the garden! **If you want to dig in the dirt next year, please let the office know.**



2020-2021 Performing Arts Series



The Special Consensus Performed on Friday, October 9, 2020

Auditorium and balcony seating is limited to 250 guests per show.



The Icebox Radio Theater—Friday, December 11, 2020

This Christmas, the IBRT will offer a special gift to the community. ‘Christmas in the Northland’ will be an evening of music, comedy, and holiday fun unlike anything the Northland has ever seen. Come enjoy area musicians, radio adventure and comedy from the IBRT, and an all-audience Christmas sing-along to wrap up the evening.



Bob & the Beachcombers—Friday, February 5, 2021

This all-ages family fun show features the super surfing hits of the sixties, some of the classic rock & roll of the 50’s, along with popular favorites from the 70’s and the 80’s as well. But it’s not just the music—it’s so much more! Great music, dancing, audience participation, sing-alongs and all of the excitement of a beach blanket bingo!



Duelly Noted—Friday, March 5, 2021

Duelly Noted is a one-of-a-kind act with both sass and class. They play all your favorite hits from the 60’s to today. Cassandra and Jacy not only have a charismatic connection on-stage, but they are also best friends off-stage. Whether you want to hear All About That Bass, Don’t Stop Believing, or I Will Survive; Duelly Noted will have you on your feet and singing at the top of your lungs. It’s all about you!

Thank you to our 2020 - 2021 Season Sponsors!

Platinum Sponsors:



The **MARSHALL N. KNUDSON FAMILY COMMUNITY FUND**

Gold Sponsors:



Jim and Sherrie Lessard

- Silver Sponsors:**
- ◆ Borderland Insurance
 - ◆ City Drug
 - ◆ Scott Gerlach in memory of Mary Jo Gerlach
 - ◆ Thrivent — Crossings Group
 - ◆ In memory of Karen Turnquist Johnson



Let Backus add some Happy to your Holidays!

Thursday, December 17, 2020

The Emmy Award winning vocal group,
Tonic Sol-fa,
 and Top 5 Billboard artist,
Shaun Johnson & the Big Band Experience,
 will combine for a personalized performance on their
 first ever, brand new, very shiny
"I'll Be Home For Christmas" Virtual TOUR!

Viewers will experience a 60 minute combined show from the comfort of their own couch. This special includes remarkable guests, brand new songs from an unreleased, upcoming album, limited tour merchandise, and an interactive Q&A with Shaun and others.

ONLY 200 tickets will be available for this event (All tickets are \$25 with a minimum \$5 "Pay what you can.") A portion of ticket proceeds will support Backus Community Center!

Get more details on the Backus website
<https://backusab.org/virtual-christmas-concert>

Virtual Show



Friday, December 18, 2020

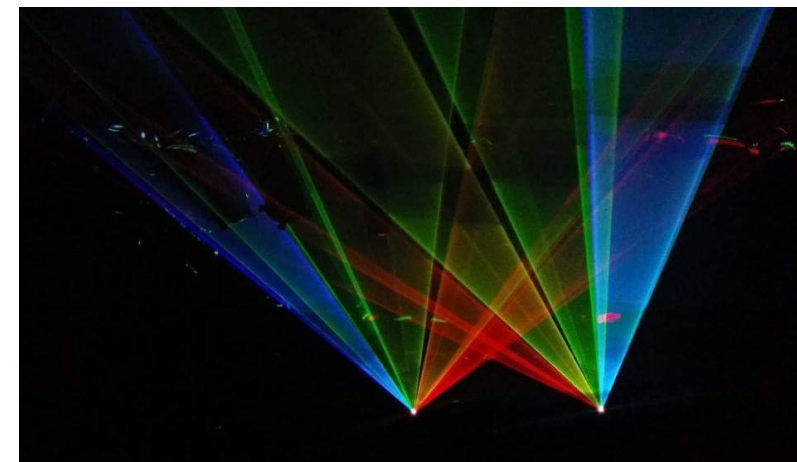
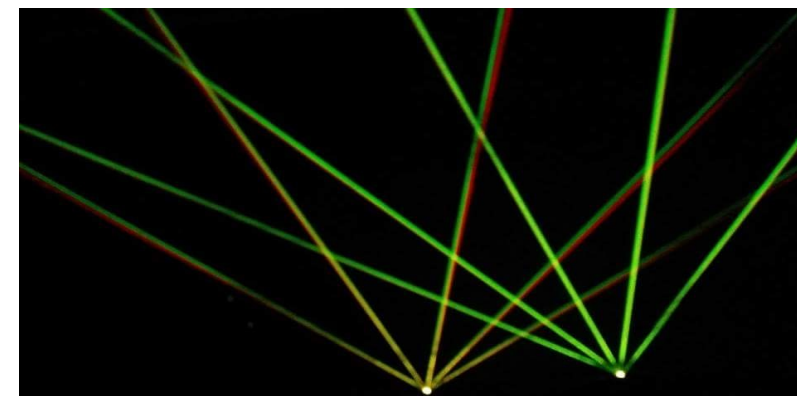
Mr. Faith's Sound and Light INC
 Christmas Laser Show

Come to the Backus Auditorium on Friday, December 18, and enjoy a beautiful **Laser Show** set to your favorite Christmas music! You won't want to miss this; it's a rare occurrence to watch a December's Northern Light Show in this much warmth and comfort!

Mr. John Faith is known as an artist extraordinaire in the world of laser art. The music selections will be very familiar to our guests; guests are encouraged to tap your toes and sing along if so inclined! This is a great show for people of all ages and is sure to be a delightful addition to your holiday programs.

Seating will be limited to the main level only for this show. See our web page for ticket information.

<http://mrfaithslasers.com>





From The Archives

150 students - Class of 1937-38 Backus - (Graduated Class of 1941)



Row 1	Row 2	?	Sally Rye	Row 4
Manny Jackson	Donald Reuter	Irel Nelson	Margaret Dahl	Phillip Misner
Richard Savard	Orlando Bakke?	Wm. Dibble	Lois King	Ed Kalar
Bill Walls	?	Delbert Kittleson	Arlene Jackson	Marjorie Raco
Dale Hall	Henry Ericksoon	John Tostinaski	Betsy Barnes	Margaret Oliver
Greg Tweeter	Paul Holenko	Jack Prettyman	Louise Tardy	Evelyn Norton
? Polenski	George Ehzman	Wm. Wheeler	Helen Reuter	Florence Carrier
Bernard Anderson	Ray Stone	Roy Forsythe?	Irene Pagedas	Mary Shewchuk
Don LeDuc	Phillip Jackson	Art Larson	Amy Nelson	Vera Holenko
John McPherson	?	Louis Lemieux	Corinne Johnson	Rosalie Hartnell
Jack Linsten	Phillip Jackson	Irvin Anderson	Arda Aune	Shirley Brandenburger
Theodore Oveson	?	James Emlaw	Elenor Erickson	Delores Barrett
Wallace Roberts	Roy Forsythe?	Robert Paulson	Dona Ratelle	?
?	Art Larson	Robert Lovell	Ethel Francis	Margaret Eidsberg
Jim King	Louis Lemieux	Frank Johnson?	Romelle Shelrud	?
Terry Doraghty	Irvin Anderson	Floyd Stone	?	?
Gordon Everett	James Emlaw	Jim Hammond	Barbara Wagner	?
Robert Lovell	Robert Paulson	Sam Holenko	Katherine Balaski	Mae Pearson
Frank Johnson?	Irel Nelson	?	Elvie Mastin	Alice Cook
Floyd Stone	Wm. Dibble	Clarence Bigler	?	Alice Holenko
Jim Hammond	Delbert Kittleson	Eddie Urban	June Anderson	Julia Bartowski
Sam Holenko	John Tostinaski	Row 3	Bob Howard	Edna Johnson
?	Jack Prettyman	Floyd Larson	Claire Steele	Mavis Thompson
Clarence Bigler	Wm. Wheeler	Belvia Arch	Art Enzman	Clara Olson?
Eddie Urban		Carolyn Kroll	Ron Sweeny	Mae Bergvall
		Lorraine Schultz		?
		Shirley Trompeter		



Row 5
 Vernon Goodwin
 Addy Watt
 Ray Stone?
 Aune Usitalo
 Helen Thydean
 Mary Stein
 Norma Gowan
 Dawn Ratelle
 Eileen Ness
 Adeline Kantor
 Beth Wilson
 Helen Hall
 Pearl Johnson
 Bayne Manning
 Edna Sundin
 Dorothy Erickson
 Alma DeMarki
 Nadine Krogen
 ?
 Helen Reidy
 ?
 Dorothy Cook?
 ?
 ?
 Eleanor Bruneau
 Elsie Hensel

Row 6
 Dale Lookabill
 Harry Reardon
 Calvin Davis
 Jim Valentine
 Ed Jameson
 Warren Hemsted
 Ted Stepoway
 Walker Grant
 Edward Nelson
 Vernon Cassibo
 Rudy Magnuson
 Henry Carr
 Carl Reuter
 Eddie Zurick
 Jim Gordon
 Richard Titus
 Vic Davis
 ?
 Irene Schaedler
 Alice Elliott
 Beverly Easterly
 Helen Slowe
 ?
 Lorraine Alexander
 Mr. Hilden

When Backus received this photo, it was inscribed with
“150 students, class of 1937-1938, Backus Graduated class of 1941.”

Do you recognize any of these smiling faces?

The original photo hangs in the Backus office. Please feel free to stop by to see it any time!

Names and spelling may be incorrect, please feel free to contact us with updates.



Events and Happenings

The **2020 Harvest Dinner** was a great opportunity for the International Falls Community to enjoy a wonderful “home cooked” meal from the Backus kitchen. This year’s dinner was held on Friday, September 18, and all meals were served as “Pick Up”. There were 264 orders for dinner that day, and our guests enjoyed fall harvest fare: Turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes and gravy, carrots, pickled beets, rutabaga, a dinner roll, and spice cake. As in other years, **pickled beets** were made in our kitchen from fresh garden beets. Enough were made to offer pints and quarts to the public for sale. We still have a few jars available; if you hurry you can get yours to tuck in a holiday gift basket ~ or to enjoy at your dinner table!



The Harvest Dinner is an annual fundraising event for Backus. We want to thank our staff and many volunteers for making this year’s event such a terrific success, and **THANK YOU** to our many guests for participating in the dinner and supporting Backus!



Thank you to area gardeners, **Steve and Christy Early** and **Kurt and Hoa Sobczynski**, who provided fresh produce to this year’s dinner!

Making Egg rolls was the order of business on Wednesday, October 21. A determined team of Backus staff and volunteers worked together to make 178 DOZEN egg rolls for this Backus fundraising event.



Hoa Sobczynski led the way and shared her secrets for making these yummy bundles of deep-fried vegetable and meat goodness. Hoa stated, “It’s so fun and is a great fundraising event for Backus. I look forward to this every year!” All of the helpers agreed that it truly was a great opportunity to learn something new and to contribute to Backus in this way.

You can purchase egg rolls for \$20/doz in the Backus office.

Darcy Sullivan, Production Manager at KCC-TV, filmed a great short documentary showing the events of the day. You can view it on the Backus Community Center Facebook page or on YouTube by searching for “What’s Happening at Backus / Making Egg Rolls”. You won’t be disappointed.!





THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS DONORS

- Face-masks from the International Falls Chamber, Kris Everett, Lee & Carol Grim, and Paulette Ziemba
- Mower blades and supplies for weed trimmer from Schmidt's Small Engine
- Free dumpster and disposal of recyclable cardboard at monthly Ruby's Pantry from Friend's Garbage Service
- Provided forklift for service at our monthly Ruby's Pantry from Rick Roche
- Use of grocery carts for Ruby's Pantry from Menard's and from Miner's County Market
- Gift certificates for Backus garden supplies from Ronda Spotts
- Acrylic sheets for ticket booths from Harry & Sally Batdorf
- Propane Buddy Heater donation for Ruby's Pantry registration tent from Craig Moe

THANK YOU TO OUR NEW / RENEWING SEAT SPONSORS

Plaques have been placed on auditorium chairs.

- Andrew & Dru Faith in memory of John & Gen Faith
- Mary Graves-Budak in memory of Michael Kent Budak
- Tom & Jarlyn Hodel in memory of Bob Hodel, Bud Hokenson, Donna Hodel, and Jennie Hokenson
- Arden McKnight in memory of Birket Anderson, Bob Anderson, Craig McKnight Memorial, and Lee Anderson
- Ruth Sumner in memory of Gerald Sumner
- Doreen Swendsen in memory of Audrey Dahl

MEMORIALS GIVEN

- **Gladyce Arnold** from David & Ann Bzdok
- **Lorraine Carlson** from Donna Frederickson
- **Nettie Coleman** from John & Karen Wilson
- **Don Crosby** from Ron & Jancie McClanahan
- **Gordy Etestad** from Steven M. Shermoen Law Office
- **Jerry Franzen** from Ward & Linda Merrill
- **Mike Frohip** from John & Karen Wilson
- **Mrs. Glowack** from Brad & Shelly King
- **Donna Hodel** from Donna Frederickson, Ward & Linda Merrill, and Stuart & Sue Nordquist
- **Milo Jensen** (Class of 1947) from James Lutz
- **Edna Karsnia** from Allan & Beth Anderson, Elaine Beach, John & Stacey Cann, Carolyn Davison, Donna Frederickson, Robin Garbe, Robert & Jean Houska, Brad & Shelly King, Albert & E. Jean Larson, Mary Lepage, Tina Ham Peterson & Eric Peterson, Jennifer Stevens, and Beth Waterhouse
- **Delores LaRoch** from Donna Frederickson
- **Bud Larson** from E. Jean Larson
- **Audrey Leeman** from John & Karen Wilson
- **Nancy Lindahl** from Charles Larson
- **Patrick Lindsey** from Milo & Margaret Christianson
- **Gordon McMurray** (Canada Air Force Veteran) from Harry & Sally Batdorf
- **Earl & Barb Miller** from Jim & Sherrie Lessard
- **Bob Pederson** from Wayne & Mary Ann Kasich
- **Marilyn Rousseau** from Donna Frederickson, Andrew & Lorraine Hedlund, and Jim & Sherrie Lessard
- **Karlla Senske** from John & Karen Wilson
- **Orin Simon** from Ward & Linda Merrill
- **Barb & Dave Trompeter** from Donna Frederickson and Ward & Linda Merrill



KCC-TV Membership Form

Your membership contribution is tax deductible. NOTE: Backus is eligible for **Thrivent Choice Dollars**. If you would like to designate your Thrivent Choice Dollars to Backus, please contact your Rep.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email Address: _____

Phone: _____ Cell: _____

<u>Individuals</u>	<u>Businesses</u>	
____ Student \$15	____ News Anchor \$150	Businesses supporting KCC-TV will receive an informational slide that runs on the Carousel Calendar in-between video programs.
____ Crew \$50	____ Director \$250	
____ Cameraman \$100	____ Producer \$500	
	____ \$ _____	

THANK YOU TO THOSE WHO CONTRIBUTED TO RUBY'S PANTRY

- Harry & Sally Batdorf
- Henry Carey
- Degree of Honor
- Al and Wanda Linder
- Michael and Caryn Noland
- Kirsten Wagenius
- Citizens who donated at Smokey Bear Park on July 4

THANK YOU TO THESE DONORS WHO CONTRIBUTED TO COMMUNITY CAFE

- American Family Insurance
- Carol Anderson,
- Carol Bass
- Larry Bastian
- Byron & Norma Blake
- Border Bank
- Clifford & Sharon Carlson
- Justin Carney
- Sheryl Christianson
- Rev. Erin Coutts
- Steve & Christy Earley
- Donna R. Erickson
- Evangelical Covenant Church
- Tim & Marva Fairchild
- Friends Against Abuse
- Karen Ganter
- Jim & Vicki Giauque
- Mary Graves Budak
- Roger & Rebecca Griffin
- Daniel & Theresa Halpern
- Gerald & E. Jean Hilfer
- Cameron & Shelley Hokenson
- Jeff Holenko
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- Dale & Jan Johnson
- Sylvia Johston
- Margaret Kelly
- Koochiching County DFL
- Marit Lee Kucera
- Doug & Beth Lowthian
- Bob Marquardt
- Arden McKnight
- Duane & Mary Nelson
- Packing Corporation of America
- Mary B. Pelowski
- Brenda Roche
- Mary Servis
- Barbara Shaw
- Michael and Linda Orsted
- AND**
- Ricky & Ann Sigsby in Honor of Jane & Tom Barthell's Birthdays)
- Peter Skrief
- St. Thomas Church
- Verle (Punky) Stadum
- Allen Steele
- Jim & Linda Sutch
- Susan Swendsen
- Women of the ELCA Laurentian Conference
- John Turenne
- Linnea Velsvaag
- Roland Wallestad
- Randy & Patricia Waskul
- Beth Waterhouse
- Kay Wento



Backus Community Center Membership Form

Your membership contribution is tax deductible. NOTE: Backus is eligible for **Thrivent Choice Dollars**. If you would like to designate your Thrivent Choice Dollars to Backus, please contact your Rep.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email Address: _____

Phone: _____ Cell: _____

Membership Categories

____ Affiliate, \$25 to \$59 ____ Sponsor, \$150 to \$249 ____ Patron, \$500 to \$999

____ Associate, \$60 to \$99 ____ Benefactor, \$250 to \$499 ____ Presidential, \$1,000 and up

____ Supporter, \$100 to \$149



Backus Community Center Donation Form

Your membership contribution is tax deductible. NOTE: Backus is eligible for **Thrivent Choice Dollars**. If you would like to designate your Thrivent Choice Dollars to Backus, please contact your Rep.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email Address: _____

Phone: _____ Cell: _____

Amount of your gift: \$ _____

This gift is a:
 _____ Monthly Donation
 _____ One-Time Donation

Does your donation honor someone special?

In Memory of: _____

In Honor of: _____

We would be happy to notify the family of or honoree of your gift. Please provide us with their complete name and address.

Please send your check payable to
Backus Community Center
 900 Fifth Street
 International Falls, MN 56649

You can also make your contribution on line. See the options available on our website at
www.backusab.org/donations

Please call the Backus office if you have questions or need assistance. 218-285-7225



900 Fifth Street
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(218) 285-7225
www.backusab.org

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BACKUS STAFF
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Executive Director
Hoa Sobczynski,
Business Manager
Lois Lundin,
Event Coordinator
Judy Medeiros,
Event Coordinator
Alyssa Crawford,
Office Assistant
Jerry Vohler, Custodian
Joe Kenny, Janitor
Rick DeBenedet, Cook
Wanda Linder, Cook
Lenard Bobst, Cook
Mary A. Lien,
Kitchen Supervisor
Jill Malone, Event Staff
June Wilson, Event Staff
Darcy Sullivan,
Program Director, KCC-TV

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Website: www.backusab.org

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**Be sure you don't miss any
of our mailings.**
Please send us your updated address, or
just give us a call with any changes.
~ Thank you.

Do you have a photo or story that you would
like to share from your days at Backus or the
AB School? Please send them to us!

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

