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Docs Just Off 66 Receives \$50,000 in National Grant Funding

GIRARD, ILLINOIS (JANUARY 31, 2024) —On July 29th, Docs Just Off 66 received \$50,000 from the Backing Historic Small Restaurants Grant Program, a program presented by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and American Express.

Docs began in 1884 as Deck's Store and operated as a pharmacy and soda fountain until 2001. Between 2001 and 2021, there were various owners who utilized the soda fountain and kept its history alive. In December 2021, Steve and Casey Claypool purchased Doc's Soda Fountain and renamed the historic business, Docs Just Off 66. The business has been completely renovated and reopened on June 18, 2022. The nostalgic soda fountain is still in place, all the relics from the pharmacy and drug store have been put on display, and the Claypool's expanded the restaurant and added a full-service bar to this historic stop along Illinois Route 66. Docs Just Off 66 has successfully preserved the history and nostalgia of the longest operating business in Girard. This funding will support the addition of outdoor seating and will utilize a building built in the 1870's to serve as a bar and smoke house for an additional dining option.

Docs Just Off 66 is one of 50 historic small restaurants across the country to receive a grant, and just one of two restaurants in Illinois. Casey Claypool, owner of Docs said "Receiving a grant from the National Trust and American Express enables us to enhance both our small town and our historic business. This support not only preserves the unique charm of Docs but also revitalizes our community, attracting visitors and fostering local pride. It's an investment in our town's future and our business's sustainability, ensuring we continue to be a cherished destination for generations to come."

The Backing Historic Small Restaurants grant program significantly expanded its reach this year, doubling the number of grantees, including in 13 new states, and increasing the total grant funding to \$2.5 million, up from \$1 million in prior years. In its fourth year, the program now has reached nearly 125 historic small restaurants in every U.S. state, Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico. American Express launched the Backing Historic Small Restaurants program in 2021 in partnership with the National Trust for Historic Preservation to support historic and culturally significant restaurants during the pandemic. The program has since expanded its in scale and financial support to continue helping independently owned small restaurants serve their local communities for years to come. "Small restaurants are vital to our communities, and their impact perseveres, as they continue to innovate and make their neighborhoods more vibrant and connected," said Madge Thomas, Head of Corporate Sustainability at American Express. "This year's grantees represent the rich traditions and iconic stories of communities across the U.S. I'm so proud that we're able to help them grow and continue to build their legacy."

"Over the course of four years, our partnership with American Express has supported more than one hundred small, independent restaurants across the country, each with a distinctive history, representing a wide array of cuisines," said Carol Quillen, CEO of the National Trust. "Equally important is what these restaurants share. They are beloved gathering places in their neighborhoods. In many cases, they have been run for generations by the same family. Empowering small businesses that hold decades of stories is one powerful way that preservation strengthens local economies as it serves local communities."

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, which administers the Backing Historic Small Restaurants grant program, selected this year's grantees from a group of restaurants that operate in historic buildings or neighborhoods and provide cultural significance to their communities through their history, cuisine, and locations.

Many of the 2024 grant recipients include establishments that are family owned or have been operating for generations.

To see the full list and learn more about this year's Backing Historic Small Restaurants grantees, please visit [Link here: <https://savingplaces.org/historicrestaurants>].

Backing Historic Small Restaurants is part of American Express' "Backing Small" initiative, focused on providing financial support and resources to help small businesses address critical needs. Following the success of Backing Historic Small Restaurants, American Express extended the program globally in 2022 with the launch of "Backing International Small Restaurants", which has reached nine cities in five countries around the world to date.

American Express has a long history of supporting small businesses, including through its Shop Small movement and Small Business Saturday, which will celebrate its fifteenth year this fall.

Learn more about the valuable ways American Express helps restaurant owners run and grow their businesses, here: <https://onecmssl.americanexpress.com/en-us/business/merchant/support/dining/index.html>

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In addition to funds provided through the Backing Historic Small Restaurants program, American Express has provided more than \$30 million to preserve historic places in the U.S. through its partnership with the National Trust for Historic Preservation since 1993.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, a privately funded nonprofit organization, works to save America's historic sites, tell the full American story, build stronger communities, and invest in preservation's future. SavingPlaces.org | [@savingplaces](https://twitter.com/savingplaces)

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