From the Director’s Desk – A Time for “Thanks”

It was 80 years ago last month on October 13, 1937 that the new E.W. Backus Jr. High School building was officially dedicated. Guest speakers, music, and dedication of the plaques (quotes on the Auditorium walls – “Knowledge is power – Bacon,” etc) by Rev. R.O. Evans all highlighted the occasion.

This fall marks the 15th year that Citizens for Backus/AB have been in possession of both the Backus and AB Buildings. Had it not been for the perseverance of a small dedicated group of concerned citizens, our two historic buildings might have been demolished. We continue to be thankful for the efforts of those citizens who stood up for historic preservation in the face of strong opposition and vocal naysayers.

Reviewing that fifteen year period from 2002 to 2017, we at Backus have a lot to be thankful for:

• Community support amounting to over 400 Backus members for the past three years
• Financial support from Koochiching County Commissioners and the International Falls City Council
• The commitment of fifteen long-term Backus tenants whose leases account for 25% of Backus revenue
• Our volunteers who contributed over 10,200 hours of service in 2016
• Over $1.7 million in capital improvements made to both buildings
• The generosity of our grant funders especially the Otto Bremer Trust and the MN State Arts Board
• The support of our other funders including The Marshall N. Knudson Family Community Fund, Northland Foundation, Chelsea Trust, Koochiching Community Development Authority, PCA, Arrowhead Regional Arts Council and U.S. Dept. of Agriculture
• Many local businesses who support our annual Performing Arts Series
• The re-birth of community theatre through the talent and efforts of the Borealis Bards
• The support of our partners such as the Falls Hunger Coalition in providing food and meal programs – Community Café, Ruby’s Pantry, Summer Food Service Program and Community Market
• Area churches and groups who support Community Café with volunteers and donations
• Our many audience members, tenant clients, building visitors and event attendees who totaled almost 50,000 in 2016

I am personally thankful for the talented and supportive Board members we’ve had, our extremely capable and dedicated staff and a community that seems to really appreciate what the Backus Community Center has become. When I hear people say, “I’m sure glad they saved Backus” or “what would we do without Backus?” – It underscores my belief that this is the best job I’ve ever had. I am truly thankful to return to a place I always considered to be my “hometown” and to serve in the capacity that I do.

Ward Merrill, Executive Director
Pennies for Play Project Complete!

On Monday, September 16 a picnic was held at the Green Acres Park located at 6th Avenue East and 17th Street, celebrating the successful remodel.

After raising over $12,000 and obtaining a $48,575 grant from the Super Bowl Legacy Fund, Backus Community Center and Public Health/SHIP were able to completely upgrade the residential park located in South Falls.

A Helping Hand

Backus was able to raise funds for a Pennies for Play playground project thanks to generous community support. All $12,000 raised by Backus came from businesses and individuals like you! None of the playground project money came from the Backus budget.

Above, Father Ben Hadrich from St. Thomas Catholic Church offers a blessing over the playground before a ribbon cutting by Mayor Bob Anderson, Derek Foss and Tara Besch of Public Health and Robin Bjorkquist and Ward Merrill from Backus, shown with children from St Thomas School.
Borealis Bards’ *Willy Wonka* play huge success

**The Borealis Bards** completed their second full-length musical play with the October 27-28-29 performances of Roald Dahl’s *Willy Wonka*.

*Willy Wonka* follows enigmatic candy manufacturer, Willy Wonka, as he stages a contest by hiding golden tickets in five of his scrumptious candy bars. Whomever comes up with these tickets will receive a free tour of the Wonka factory, as well as a lifetime supply of chocolate. Four of the five winning children have.....challenging personalities.

The fifth child is a likable lad named Charlie Bucket. The children must learn to follow Mr. Wonka’s rules in the factory, or suffer the consequences.

**What others said about the play:**

“A small group of committed individuals can be great enjoyment to an entire community. Thank you!”

“The wonder of community - the time, talent & treasures shared to create this work of art - fun”

“I learned that even a small town theater has a great and lasting impact on people's lives”

“How special for those of all ages & both sexes to come together to create a beautiful experience for the community!”

The Bards next production will be *Anne of Green Gables* performed by the Junior Bards. Auditions will take place January 14 and 15 with performances on March 23, 24 and 25, 2018.

Left: Jocelyn Klocek, Keri Norton, Denise Kulig, Emily Maki as squirrels with Jessica Kulig as Veruca Salt.

Above: Conat as Charlie Bucket, James Yount as Grandpa Joe, Gretchen Vollrath as Grandma Josephine, Bill Johnson as Grandpa George and Karen Salo as Grandma Georgina.

Online at [www.backusab.org](http://www.backusab.org)

Facebook: Backus Community Center
2017 Treat Street

Backus’ fourth year of hosting Treat Street on Halloween was a huge success seeing 600 children all decked out in costumes trick-or-treating through the building.

The following vendors handed out candy:
- Backus Community Center
- Paws & Claws
- Arrowhead Ultra Marathon
- Spirit of the Borderland Youth Group
- First Assembly of God
- Rainy Lake Medical Center
- KAPE Coalition
- VFW Post & Auxiliary
- Koochiching County Sheriff’s Office
- Rainy River Community College PTK
- Peggy Ridgeway,
- Essentia Health
- Packing Corp of America
- Home Town Hobby & Craft
- Rainy River Recovery
- Northland Art Society
- United Health Group
- Gearhart’s Floral & Gift
- Waschke Family GM Center
- Small Town Tech
- Northland Counseling
- Kootasca
- Island View Realty
- The Dungeon
- Reed Realty
- Trustar Federal Credit Union
- First Lutheran Church

Thank you to the those who participated!!
Backus hosting monthly movie, dance and game nights

Backus Community Center is excited to announce a partnership with the KAPE Coalition (Koochiching Area Prevention in Education) and Northland Counseling enabling Backus to offer movies on the big screen in the Backus auditorium.

The first movie shown was a Halloween classic, “Hocus Pocus” on October 13, with “Open Season” shown November 10 in honor of deer hunting season.

"We are excited to be able to offer popular movies now with the help of KAPE Coalition and Northland Counseling to sponsor the project." said Robin Bjorkquist, Backus Event Coordinator. "These organizations seem perfect collaborators in what we are trying to do, which is offer wholesome events that the whole family can enjoy together."

Movie admission is $2 per person and popcorn will be available. Backus will offer more movie nights throughout the coming year that will focus on holidays, special events or themes.

For young adults ages 18 and over, board games are set up in the Backus dining room, free of charge. "We are trying to engage people of all ages in social activity that gets them out of the house and gives them something fun to do," said Bjorkquist. "One of our goals when doing strategic planning was to engage a younger audience. We hope this night will do the trick with three activities geared to engage the younger population." A variety of board games will be available in the Backus dining room but participants are welcome to bring their own board games to play.

The movie, dance and game time all begin at 7:00 pm at Backus, located at 900 5th Street in the Falls. Watch the Backus website for upcoming family fun nights, www.backusab.org.

Backus Community Center's mission statement, Historic Backus Community Center, the heart of International Falls, where all generations celebrate the arts, culture, recreation, wellness and lifelong learning, seeks to serve the community in many ways. As a 501(c)(3) non-profit, all dollars collected at events go back into the operation of the building, including programs such as Community Café, summer art week, junior high Bronco basketball and many other programs, events and services. For more information, please contact Backus at 218-285-7225 or www.backusab.org.

John Faith and The Dungeon is hosting teen dances with video gaming the same night as the movies. Kids ages 12 to 18 are welcome to visit The Dungeon for $7 per person or two for $10 to enjoy an evening of music and games. Snacks will be available.

Due to licensing restrictions, we are unable to promote in print the names of the movies playing. Backus will do our best to get the word out on what movie title is shown each month.
Looking for the perfect gift for those who have everything? Give a Backus event ticket! $12 per ticket good for any Backus-sponsored show. Available at the Backus Office, open Mon-Fri 8 am—4 pm.

WELCOME

Welcome to the following new Backus Community Center Members!
Complete lists of members, donors, contributors and sponsors are printed each February in the Annual Report.

Andy & Lindsi Barnhart
Harry & Sally Batdof
Henrietta (Eddie) Blaha
D. & Shirley Boeckers
Sandra Brue
Joan Christensen
Margaret Christianson
Derek Foss
James & Vicki Giauque
David & Polly Hebig
Betty J. Henrickson
Rick & Anne Holen
Rick & Raynita Houglum
Dr. Willard Johnson
Julie & Einar Johnson
Etta Johnson-Millard
Judy Kielczewski
Ingeborg Kofstad
Joe & April Krause
Val Larsen
Martha Enzmann & Rick L'Heureux
Gloria Lindstrom
Jay & Pam Lofgren
Robert Marquardt
Mary Lee Maruk
Diane Maxey
Don Kosek & Sarah Monahan
Rebecca Lucas & Robin Monahan

BOILER PROJECT COMPLETED — With funding in excess of $68,000, Backus Community Center refurbished the 105-year-old boiler refractories that are instrumental in heating the three-story building.

A refractory is something capable of enduring high temperatures. The compartments that were rebuilt are gas chambers under the large steam boilers that create steam to run through the heating system of the building.

Thanks to grants and funding from the USDA Rural Development Community Facility Grant Program, Koochiching County and KCDA, plus $10,000 Backus had ear-marked for the project, the work was completed September 9.

Backus hired specialty contractor, Jamar Company, to do the job. Jamar crew John Jones, Cheryl Gaetzke, Darin Laine and Devlin Dean, along with Backus Custodian Jerry Vohler and volunteer Scott Gerlach, worked hard to complete the project in just over two weeks. Kurt Sobczynski, PE Mechanical Engineer from Barr Engineering volunteered as Project Manager.

The job included removing a dumpster load of crumbling bricks, cleaning the area for new brick installation, and the installation of new bricks, in the 20-foot long by 10-foot wide by 3-foot tall spaces under each boiler.

Richard Thompson with Northern Lumber contributed to the project by donating his time and forklift to unload the pallets and pallets of bricks and materials that were needed to complete the job. Northshore Mining donated 1-1/2 pallets of bricks for the project.
BACKUS OPERATES THANKS TO YOU!

Backus receives funding from a variety of sources including grants, city and county funds, sponsors, memberships and donations—they all matter and they all make a difference!

If you are not a member, stop by the office at 900 5th Street or go online to www.backusab.org to become a member. Memberships start at just $60. All memberships are tax deductible as Backus is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

Members get 10% discount on room rentals, invitations to the annual dinner meeting in February and “Member’s Only” events, quarterly newsletter, discounts on season tickets plus two free “Bring a Friend” tickets upon purchase, and the satisfaction of knowing you are making a difference in our community!

Thinking about end of the year giving? Please consider Backus for your tax deductible donation. Your funds will go toward programs such as Community Café, Ruby’s Pantry, Bronco junior high basketball, youth art programs, open gym and much, much more!

BACKUS 2017-2018 PERFORMING ARTS SEASON

- **MONROE CROSSING BLUEGRASS CHRISTMAS** | December 15, 2017 @ 7:00 pm | OPENING ACT: SLOUGHRASS
- **DAREN STREBLOW** | February 2, 2018 @ 7:00 pm | FAMILY-FRIENDLY COMEDY!
- **KAT PERKINS** | March 10, 2018 @ 7:00 pm | FROM NBC’S “THE VOICE” SEASON 6
- **CHILDREN’S THEATRE COMPANY PRESENT “SEEDFOLKS”** | April 27, 2018 @ 7:00 pm

The tale of healing and restoration with agility, empathy and a whole lot of heart.

Thank you to the following sponsors who help make this season possible:

**PLATINUM ($1,000+)** Family of Karen Turnquist Johnson, Packaging Corporation of America, Stewart’s Super One

**GOLD ($500-$999)** Border Boxes/Epic Threads, Bremer Bank, Jim & Sherrie Lessard, Wagner Construction Inc

**SILVER ($250-$499)** Ballan Furniture, Boyer Scrub-A-Rug, City Drug Store, Days Inn, In Memory of Robert Frederickson, MD&W Railway, Shermoen Jaksa Law PLLC, Up North Builders Inc

**BRONZE ($100-$249)** Border State Bank, Granite Electronics, Rainy Lake Oil Inc, Steve Shermoen Law Office, Waschke Family GM Center
December
5th Borderland Community Orchestra 7:00 pm
9th Breakfast with Santa 9 am to 11 am
10th FHS Band & Choir Holiday Concert 3:00 pm
11th Ruby’s Pantry Food Distribution 5:00 to 6:30 pm
12th St. Thomas Christmas Program 6:30 pm
15th Monroe Crossing Bluegrass Christmas 7:00 pm
25-26 Backus Closed for Christmas

January
1st Backus Closed for New Year’s
8th Ruby’s Pantry Food Distribution 5:00 to 6:30 pm
20th FYGBR Runners Reception
20th Icebox Days Chili Challenge
28th Arrowhead 135 Ultra Marathon Spaghetti Feed

February
2nd Daren Streblow Comedy Show 7:00 pm
7th All School Music Festival
8th Backus Annual Meeting 5 pm
12th Ruby’s Pantry Food Distribution 5:00 to 6:30 pm

February Continued
17th Borealis Bards Room to Act 5:30 pm
19th Contractor Class 8:00 am
21 All School Choral Festival
24th TET - Vietnamese New Year Special Dinner 6 pm

March
10th Kat Perkins from NBC’s “The Voice” 7:00 pm
12th Ruby’s Pantry Food Distribution 5:00 to 6:30 pm
24th-25th Junior Bards Performance

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

Walkercise
Every Monday, Wednesday, Friday | 10:00 to 11:00 am

Adult Volleyball | Wednesdays | 7:00 to 9:00 pm
Adult Pickleball | Thursdays | 7:00 to 9:00 pm

For more details and updates, visit www.backusab.org or stop by the office at 900 5th Street, Int’l Falls