

# BACKUS Community Center

Volume 10, Issue 1

March 2018

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## **From the Director's Desk – Historic Places**

Last May Linda and I attended a presentation at the AmericInn by Professor David Woodward of the University of Minnesota Duluth. The program was sponsored by the Koochiching County Historical Society and focused on “The Value of Historic Resources” and the importance of preserving our community’s historic and cultural resources. Woodward addressed an overflowing audience that included county commissioners, the mayor, city officials, local business people, community leaders and many interested citizens. I invited Mr. Woodward to visit Backus prior to leaving town. He did and was impressed with Backus.

His presentation inspired six pages of notes on my part and reinforced my passion for historic preservation. Woodward focused on “why historic places matter.” Following are a few of his points:

- Old places create a sense of continuity
- Old places embody our identity and inspire creativity and entrepreneurship
- Old places give us an understanding of history that no other evidence can
- Old places place us in the continuum of time
- Why not take history and imbed it in your town’s comprehensive plan?
- The past is the biggest tourist attraction
- Historic structures root us to our past
- We don’t “own” old buildings – we’re renting them. If we stop paying the “rent” – we will lose them
- Historic places enhance our community pride
- Old places connect us to our ancestors

- Developing and funding “Heritage” is important
- It’s always more sustainable to re-use old buildings
- Old buildings have “embedded energy”
- Old places foster a sustainable and equitable economy

All of us who feel a passion for Backus and AB can appreciate Woodward’s points. Preserving, reusing and celebrating “old places” like Backus and AB are what we’re all about. We’re fortunate to still have so many historic places standing in our area: the band shell, Sports Stadium, Post Office, City Hall, Masonic Lodge, Mill Office, Library, Courthouse, Ranier Community Building, Backus and AB, plus many more on Main Street and Ranier. In addition many older and well-maintained homes add a historic character to some neighborhoods.

The next challenge for us is the renovation of the Alexander Baker Building. Within the year we hope to contract for a “Historic Structure Report” which will open the door to development and re-use of the building. We believe that effort will come to fruition in the next several years.



*Ward Merrill,  
Backus  
Executive  
Director*

**MISSION  
STATEMENT:**

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

*Backus is more than a building. We are a dedicated group of Board Members, Staff and Volunteers who want to improve the community one event and project at a time.*

**Backus' new partnership with Dragon Boat Festival**

The 7th annual Boundary Waters Dragon Boat Festival will be held on Saturday, June 30, 2018, and will become the only international festival in the world that will see teams race down the international border on the international waters of Rainy River.

Dragon boat teams will race on international waters after putting in at both Sorting Gap Marina in Fort Frances AND Pat Roche Boat Landing in International Falls.

In 2014 an application was made to form the International Boundary Waters Dragon Boat Foundation, making the Foundation one of only two Dragon Boat Foundations in Canada at the time of incorporation. In 2017 they received Incorporation in the state of Minnesota, making their Foundation, Club and Teams truly international.

The Foundation, through the support of the club and it's three official crews, hosts an annual dragon boat festival that is free to the public to attend the festivities. This festival raises money to fight Breast Cancer with the endorsement of the Canadian Cancer Society Breast Cancer cause as well as a local charitable causes including Backus Community Center this year.

The Foundation had been looking for an International Falls organization to partner with to expand the ever-growing summer event. "This was the perfect opportunity for Backus to come along side an existing event to bring people to our area for a unique event and highlight what Backus offers the community, not just in our building, but outside our community center walls." said Robin Bjorkquist, Event Coordinator.

The annual event brings people from all over the countries, both U.S. and Canada, who have a passion for dragon boat racing. "Dragon boat racers are competitive." said Annely Armstrong-Thorstad, Boundary Waters Dragon Boat Foundation Board Member and paddling coach. "This year we will add a tug-of-war with the help of Backus Community Center, everyone is excited to have an additional competition." said Armstrong-Thorstad.

The return of the tug-of-war, last won in 2013 by TEAM USA, is a welcome addition to the day as the tug will be held between morning and afternoon boat races. Tuggers are needed on both sides of the border. If you would like to participate, call Robin at 373-3004 or visit [www.internationaltugofwar.org](http://www.internationaltugofwar.org).

Go online for event details: [www.backusab.org](http://www.backusab.org)  
[www.internationaltugofwar.org](http://www.internationaltugofwar.org)  
[www.boundarywatersdragonboat.com](http://www.boundarywatersdragonboat.com)





# VOLUNTEER Luncheon

**Tuesday, April 17 @ Noon**  
**Watch your mail for details!**

Not a volunteer? Call or stop by today to become one. Lots of opportunities to serve—baking cookies, ushering, serving, dish washing, deliver posters—every job is important! Call Robin 373-3004

If you have dropped your land line and just use a cell phone number, please call Robin at (218) 373-3004.

Planning to move or get a new mailing address? Please notify us so we can update our records and keep in touch—you are important to Backus!



## Junior Bards Anne of Green Gables

Fifteen eager, young faces peer down from the stage as they listen intently for their instruction. First-time director Cody Boyer sits in the audience, watching the rehearsal and taking notes on slight changes to where an actor should stand or deliver a line. His assistant director, Graysen Gable, also takes notes, often conferring with Cody on the feedback they will give following the scene practice.

Borealis Bards, the inter-generational community theatre program of Backus Community Center, produced an all-youth cast performance of “Anne of Green Gables” as the third event of their 2017-2018 season. This was the first full-length play for the troupe’s youth program and the first full length youth production on the Backus stage in nearly 20 years.

This theatre arts production, featuring local children, was made possible in part by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Arrowhead Regional Arts Council, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund. The Bards also received a very generous donation from the International Falls Rotary Chapter.

The next Borealis Bards event will be its fourth annual “Room to Act” scheduled for the evening of Saturday, April 21. The dinner theatre production will offer an exciting line-up of entertainment to include song, comedy, and a few special guests. Don’t miss this one!! Tickets are available at the usual outlets.

The 2018-2019 season will start in October with another fun filled musical TBA in the near future. Stay tuned!!



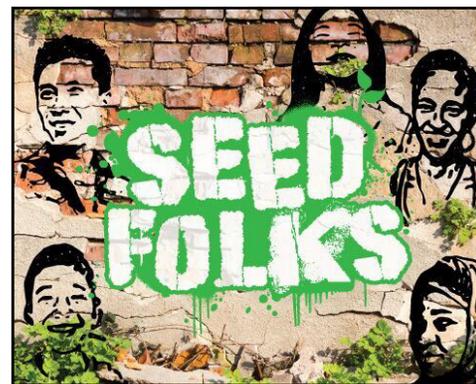


## 2017-2018 PERFORMING ARTS SEASON WRAPS UP CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY PRESENT "SEEDFOLKS"

Thursday, April 26 @ 7:00 pm

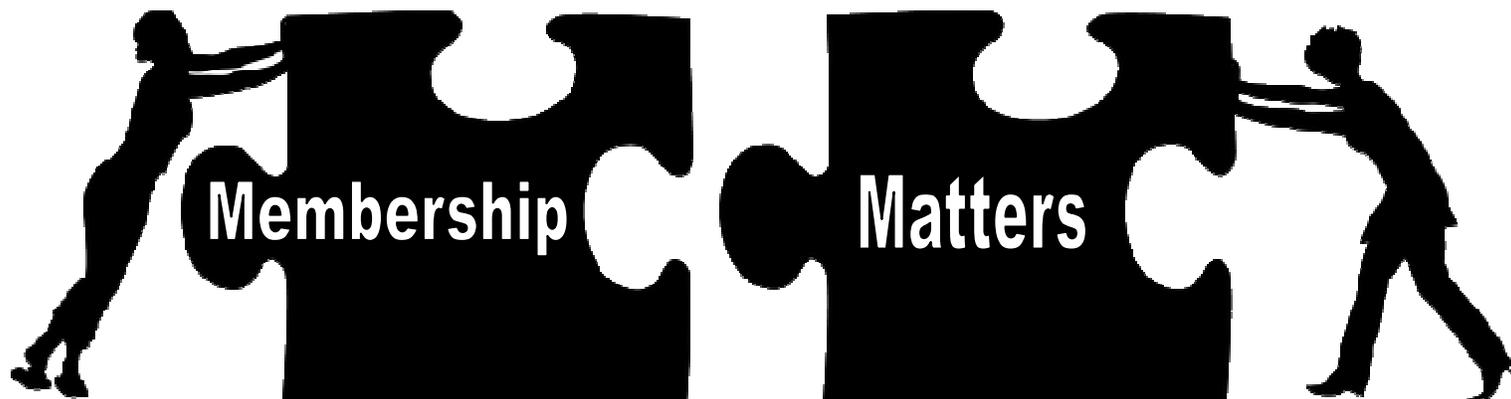
Newbery Medal-winning *Seedfolks* from Paul Fleischman tells thirteen stories from diverse perspectives—young and old, immigrant and native, haunted and hopeful. A fractured neighborhood unites with just a few seeds, turning a drab empty lot in Cleveland into beautiful green garden.

Play performed by Sonja Parks



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 Jakska 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



**Membership at Backus Community Center matters.** Like pieces to a puzzle, every membership is an integral part of our fabric. Membership dollars help us pay the bills, membership numbers help us receive grants. Being a member of Backus gets you invitations to the annual "Members Only" fall event, annual meeting each February, room rental discount PLUS you get the satisfaction of knowing you are part of the team that is the "heart of International Falls"! Join today online at [www.backusab.org](http://www.backusab.org) or stop by the office at 900 5th Street, International Falls! Be an important piece of the Backus puzzle!

## Backus announces 2018-2019 Performing Arts Season Lineup

Backus is pleased to announce the following artists tentatively schedule to perform next season:

### **Ishmael**

**September 22, 2018**

Drawn from Herman Melville's classic novel, *Moby Dick*, *Ishmael* tells the tale of a restless school-teacher still haunted by the incredible and tragic adventure of his youth.

A shape-shifting actor and three bluegrass musicians conjure a funny, thoughtful, harrowing play about one man's drive to see the world and another man's insatiable quest to destroy it.

### **Borealis Bards**

**"Little Shop of Horrors"**

**October 26-28, 2018**

A nerdy florist finds his chance for success and romance with the help of a giant man-eating plant who demands to be fed.

### **The Hunts**

**November 9, 2018**

With a harmony-laced take on alt-folk that's both breathtaking and sweetly ethereal, The Hunts are a Chesapeake, Virginia-based band made up of seven brothers and sisters who've been playing music together almost their entire lives. Ranging from ages 16 to 24, twin sisters Jenni and Jessi and their five brothers Josh, Jonathan, Jordan, Justin, and Jamison all learned to sing and play violin as little kids and spent much of their

childhood performing throughout their community. After widening their following and playing at theaters and festivals around the country—and teaching themselves to play instruments like mandolin, piano, ukulele, banjo, and drums—The Hunts started experimenting with songwriting and soon brought to life a batch of songs that reveal their sophisticated sense of melody and undeniably dreamy innocence.

### **Rhythmic Circus Red & Green Show**

**November 27, 2018**

Rhythmic Circus is a troupe of internationally renowned artists. Since their early start at a small theatre in northeast Minneapolis, they have grown into an international sensation touring to over 100 cities worldwide. Home grown hoofers from Minneapolis hit the road with a trunk full of tap shoes, funky costumes and a big brass band, ready to burst onto the stage. "Heatbox" the human beat-box, joins the swingin' seven-piece funk band to accompany each tap, shuffle, and stomp with a clang, riff and refrain. It's easy to see why this troupe was a 2012 winner of the Edinburgh Festival "Spirit of the Fringe" Award. In this joyous parade of genre-hopping music and hard-hitting percussive dance, you'll be jumping out of your seat and dancing to the beat!

### **Tuey Wilson, Comic Juggler**

**February 1, 2019**

Tuey Wilson has always had a passion for physical skills. He grew up skiing, skateboarding, waterskiing, and anything else that satisfied his self-described personality: "introverted show-off." He learned to juggle in eighth grade from his older brother, but didn't take it seriously until he was a senior in high school, after a friend let him borrow some professional juggling equipment. His life has never been the same!

### **Sam Miltich & Friends:**

**Mental Health through Jazz**  
**April 12, 2019**

Sam Miltich brings greater awareness, tolerance, and education focused on mental health issues through the lens of his own life experience and music career. This program will define the true nature of mental illness as a medical condition, touching on issues of access to care and resources while addressing stigma and the damage that can do. Sam uses his personal story of recovery and management of his own condition to help inspire light and hope for a meaningful life. Sam speaks about jazz as an American art form and profiles one of its greatest practitioners, Thelonious Monk, to illustrate how the story of his life and music has influenced Miltich's art and aided his personal recovery.

## RRCC Voyager Food Pantry



### A Helping Hand

Backus gave a helping hand to Rainy River Community College by facilitating the opening of a food pantry for students. Rainy River staff person, LeAnne Hardy, had long-envisioned an on-campus food pantry like what other campuses offer. LeAnne shared her vision with Robin and Steve Bjorkquist, who have a heart for the students knowing many come from far away places. As an em-

ployee of Backus, Robin proposed Backus become fiscal agent for the project which would allow donations to be tax deductible and allow for products to be purchased from Second Harvest, the agency that supplies the local food shelf. Karina McClellan, Executive Director of Falls Hunger Coalition gave her blessing, "I support any program that is going to feed people." she said.

At the same time, Backus members Tom and Barb Smith were looking to donate a refrigerator to a good cause. This opportunity allowed for fresh produce and perishable food products to be offered in addition to the non-perishable items on the shelves.

The pantry opened on February 19. Over 400 pounds of food was distributed to an average of 40 students a day by the end of February. The students have been very appreciative, and RRCC staff have been very supportive providing the initial funding for the project.

If you would like to make a donation to the project, please send contributions to Backus Community Center, 900 5th Street, International Falls MN 56649 and mark as "RRCC Voyager Food Pantry".

# Summer Arts @ Backus

**Prairie Fire Children's Theatre present "Pinocchio"**

June 18 to 22 with a performance June 23 @ 7 pm



**Art Classes** for kids ages 5 to 18 June 18-22

**Z Puppets Workshop** June 25-29

Z Puppets Rosenschnoz delights children and their adults with feats of imagination, mixing hand-crafted puppetry, zany comedy with live music.



Watch for details and complete brochure coming out in April or go online at [www.backusab.org](http://www.backusab.org)

December 15, 2015: Boynton Health Service of the University of Minnesota Twin Cities (UMTC) released the [2015 College Student Health Survey](#) identifying health and health-related behaviors affecting college students and their academic success.

### **New Stressor Identified**

Food insecurities are related to poor nutrition and considered to be a chronic stressor and social determinant of health. For the first time, in 2015 students were asked if they worried their food would run out before they had money to buy more. Nearly a quarter (22 percent) of undergraduate students answered yes to this question. Because this is the first time a question like this been asked in a comprehensive college health survey, further analysis is needed to determine the implications of food insecurities among students. Contributing factors could include lack of money, inability to access affordable food (for example buying food at a grocery store, convenience store or fast food restaurant), mental health issues or difficulties managing finances.

## Free Kids Lunches Served!

**Lunch Serving Times: 11:45 am to 1:15 pm**

This program offers **free** summer meals to children age 1 to 18, Monday through Friday, June 4 to August 31.

- There are no income guidelines or eligibility requirements.
- Parents may eat with their children at no charge if they are Food Shelf clients or have a need for Food Shelf services.
- Regular adult meals are \$4.00 per meal.
- This institution is an equal opportunity provider.





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

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## Upcoming Events

### April

- 6—Minnesota Deer Hunters Banquet 5:00 pm
- 9—Ruby's Pantry Food Distribution 5:00 pm
- 10, 11, 12—MN Connections Academy Testing
- 16&17—MN Virtual Academy Testing
- 17—Backus Volunteer Luncheon @ Noon
- 17—Centra Pipelines Minnesota Dinner 6:00 pm
- 18—FHS Spring Band & Choir Concerts 7:00 pm
- 21—Borealis Bards Room to Act
- 26—"Seedfolks" 7:00 pm

### May

- 5-6—Dancin' with Darcie Dance Recitals
- 14—Ruby's Pantry Food Distribution 5:00 pm

### June

- 4—Summer Food Service Program Starts  
Lunch served 11:45 am to 1:15 pm

### June

- 11—Ruby's Pantry Food Distribution 5:00 pm
- 18-23—Summer Art Week featuring Prairie Fire  
Children's Theatre "Pinocchio"
- 23—"Pinocchio" performance 7:00 pm
- 25-29—Z Puppets Rozenschnoz workshop week  
with Friday performance
- 30—International Dragon Boat Festival and  
Tug of War @ Pat Roche Boat Landing

#### 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

For more details and updates, visit [www.backusab.org](http://www.backusab.org)  
or stop by the office at 900 5th Street, Int'l Falls