

## FOOD BANK

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State lawmakers recognized the value of North Country Food Bank: The Legislature approved \$3 million in the state bonding bill last year for a new building.

That funding requires a 50 percent local match, so North Country has been busy fundraising. It has raised \$1 million so far, including the (\$190,000) value of the donated land, and it hopes to raise a total of \$500,000 from the 21 counties in its service area. Becker County has been asked to give \$35,000 and is considering the request.

The counties of Roseau, Kittson, Lake of the Woods, Marshall, Pennington and Norman

have donated \$25,000 apiece, and Wadena and Clearwater counties have verbally approved \$25,000 apiece pending an official vote.

The Otto Bremer Trust has committed \$300,000 to the project and private donations have been secured for \$140,000 so far. Otter Tail Power Co. has committed \$56,000, Ag Country Farm Services \$30,000 and the Mardag Foundation \$50,000. All told, North Country has raised \$4.4 million towards its \$6 million goal.

Some Becker County commissioners were concerned that Polk County, where the food bank is located, has not yet been approached for a donation. But Novak said commissioners there are very supportive of the project, and Polk County

will be asked for a larger donation than other counties if funding comes up short.

The donation requests are based on county size, that's why Becker and other larger counties are being asked to donate \$35,000, while smaller counties are being asked for \$25,000.

Novak said townships have been asked to donate much smaller amounts, several hundred dollars each, and said municipalities will also be included in the fund-raising appeal.

The big national grocery retailers are donating less and less of the traditional food bank goods like boxed macaroni and cheese and canned soup and vegetables, because they have found a market for those items in the dollar store chains, Novak said.

"It's kind of scary for food banks," she said.

To fill the void, partnerships have been formed with big produce vendors. "Apples and oranges and potatoes and onions and so forth," she said. "It's a little harder to handle and to store, but we're moving into that realm. Agencies have to be willing to learn and change, and that's what's more readily available to us." That's why more freezer and cooler space is especially needed, as well as things like a licensed clean room for bulk pasta and similar items, she said.

The current two-level food bank building in the old Bridgeman Dairy has a very uneven concrete floor and lacks the high side walls for stacking food pallets. "Our freezers and coolers are not even

close to adequate size," she said. There is no room for expansion and the current set-up is just "not conducive to food operations these days," she added.

For the second year in a row now, the Becker County Food Pantry has provided over 500,000 pounds of food locally, said director Brad Carlson. "That's 250 tons of food,"

he said. "One out of 11 families in Becker County are clients of the food shelf — some only once, some monthly."

Fifteen years ago, each person received 54 pounds of food per visit, now each person receives 29 pounds of food, he said.

He fully supports the North Country project. "Anything that helps them out, helps us out," he said.

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## HIGH NOTE

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a moment like we had on Sunday — that inner artist isn't just awake, but is fervently calling on you to dance, revel, laugh, cry, create, inspire ... It's powerful stuff.

Choir music can be particularly powerful. When a group of people sing together, and especially when they do it well, that experience forges a feeling of connection, reminding us that we're all a part of something greater than ourselves.

Though this is my first year with the Lakes Area Chorale, I've been a singer for well over 20 years, both with choirs and as a soloist, and I've found choir music to be a lesson in the human experience. When multiple voices singing several different notes come together in harmony, it results in a fuller, more intense sound than any singular voice, no matter how lovely, is capable of producing on its own. We truly are better together.

It's that thrill of the shared singing experience that brings us Lakes Area Chorale members together every Sunday.

We're a well-numbered bunch, and we stretch the limits of the practice room at First Lutheran Church, cramming ourselves into long rows of chairs that reach from end to end of the room, sitting elbow-to-elbow with our neighbors as we pore over every note, every rhythm, every pronunciation of every word of every song.

It takes real, serious, sometimes painstaking work to get your sound where you want it to be. To achieve those magical moments that give you goosebumps. The whole story, though, is that rehearsals have also been pretty darn fun. Director Barbara Schramm makes sure of that, injecting humor into every lesson.

"I always say, a choir responds to humor," she says. "If they have fun, then they really want to do it, even if it's parts that they haven't done so well."

Her teaching style includes plenty of jokes and funny stories about her past — and with her long history of professional singing and teach-



Marie Johnson / Tribune  
Lakes Area Chorale Director Barbara Schramm leads the choir during a rehearsal at First Lutheran Church in Detroit Lakes last weekend. The choir has been rehearsing every Sunday since January in preparation for the April 7 show.

### If you go

**What:** Lakes Area Chorale Spring Concert: "New York, New York: Best of Broadway/Best of Lincoln Center"

**When:** Sunday, April 7 at 2 p.m.

**Where:** The Historic Holmes Theatre, Detroit Lakes

**Cost:** Freewill donation

**Details:** Broadway classics and humorous opera songs sung by the Lakes Area Chorale; show will also include multiple solos and small ensemble pieces, with live instrumental accompaniment and performances by Summit School Dancers.

ing, there's plenty of material for her to work with.

Schramm was born and raised in Moorhead, and lives there again today, but for about 40 years in-between her high school graduation and her return to her hometown in 2007, she lived in a lot of different places, including Illinois, Virginia, Michigan, Connecticut, New York City and then Germany, where she lived for 20 years.

She met her husband, Roland, in Germany, and continually developed her talents and grew her career there. She presented master classes in vocal performance, held workshops for choral conductors and also conducted choirs herself. After she and Roland returned to Moorhead, she taught Voice at Concordia College until her retirement in 2014.

Directing the Lakes Area Chorale this year has been a much-enjoyed return to choral conducting, she says. She was recruited for the one-year gig through her connections in the local music world. Long-time Chorale Director, Lori Paakh, was unable to lead the group this year

due to another commitment.

"They called me and I said, 'Well, it's exactly the kind of choir I love to direct, so yes!'" Schramm explains of how she came on board. "I love community choirs who just love to sing and have a good time — and learn a little bit about music and a little bit about voice and how to be healthy singers."

She says she's seen the choir come a long way since the first rehearsal in early January: "People are letting their voices be freer. If everybody lets their voice go, you get the best choral blend... They also have a much wider dynamic level."

The Chorale has been rehearsing for two to three hours every Sunday in preparation for this year's spring concert. Coming up on Sunday, April 7 at 2 p.m. at the Holmes Theatre in Detroit Lakes, the concert's theme was inspired by Schramm's time in New York City.

"New York, New York: Best of Broadway/Best of Lincoln Center" will feature a mix of Broadway classics — like "All That Jazz" and "The Sound of Music" — along with a few humorous opera

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