Dear Friends,

As we move into the beautiful spring/summer season in northwest Michigan, it is with great humbleness that I assume the role of President of the Board of Directors for such an amazing organization. I thank outgoing Board members Gwen Van Dorp and Mac Whisner for the many outstanding accomplishments and growth BACN has achieved under their leadership. I know I speak for all Board members, staff, Neighbors, and volunteers when saying how much they will be missed. At the same time, we are excited to welcome new Executive Director Diane Mahoney. Diane brings over 30 years of leadership in the nonprofit world and most recently has served as Executive Director of the Bay Area Community Foundation in the Bay City area.

In October of 2023, BACN began a year-long celebration of serving the needs of our community for the past 40 years. The theme of this newsletter—Honoring our Past while Embracing our Future—is testament to the life of BACN over these years. Beginning with the dream thirteen area churches had of caring for those in need, BACN has grown to be a model nonprofit throughout northwest Michigan. Our goal for the future is to continue growing the outreach of our mission by providing food and clothing, financial assistance, education and social support while partnering with like-minded organizations to better serve our Neighbors.

We are thankful for the many generous community members who help us continue the momentum by supporting BACN financially or through volunteerism. Giving is not just about donating money or time—it is about making a difference. Everyone who supports BACN in one way or another is making a positive difference for our community. We thank you for your partnership!

Gratefully,
Kim Simon
BACN Board Chair
**Weaving the Past to Our Present**

Jack and Judy Harnish have a rich history with BACN being carried into the present and future. The couple has been volunteering in a variety of capacities at BACN since moving to Honor in 2013. Years ago Jack, a retired Methodist minister, began using scraps from unusable BACN clothing donations to weave rugs and placemats on his family heirloom loom. Proceeds from sold rugs go straight back to BACN.

Judy has been coordinator for the St. Andrews Mission Project (STAMP), a partner effort with BACN which every year makes approximately 20 area homes safer, warmer and drier. She currently serves as a BACN receptionist, and for years has chaired the BACN Revenue Development Committee. Jack and Judy also volunteer during BACN’s new Tuesday evening hours. As Jack recently shared, “We’ve always believed in giving back to community. Now BACN is open during hours that let working families visit, and we wanted to be a part of that effort.”

During BACN’s new facility campaign, the Harnishes agreed to be the public “Face of the Campaign.” They worked tirelessly making community appearances needed to garner the needed support. Judy says of the experience, “This new building is a game-changer for BACN Neighbors. Visiting BACN is an entirely new experience now—welcoming and respectful. The community should be so proud of what they have accomplished.”

**The Founding Vision**

*Note from a BACN Neighbor:*

“You fed us when we were hungry; You kept us warm when we were cold. You kept us in light when it was dark; You gave us strength when we felt weak. Most of all, you gave us hope.”

We’ve often shared that BACN was founded by area churches, but have you ever wondered which ones came together to take this step? Although the box below shows the founding churches (most still active partners of BACN), it doesn’t tell the whole story of today’s 25 parishes supporting BACN with volunteers and donations of financial gifts, food and other goods.

Blaine Christian Church was one of the founding churches. Current Blaine volunteers Gary and Carolyn Waterson remember the days when food and clothing were handed out from the little green cottage across the street. Gary (current BACN Board member) says, “Our church continues to believe BACN’s work is a way to be the hands and feet of Jesus.”

Ned Edwards, founding pastor of St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, remembers well when the original churches banded together. He says, “Finally, the decision was made to create a nonprofit that could draw funding from the entire community. This is what set the wheels in motion to expand the mission of BACN.”

Newly departed Board President Gwen Van Dorp shares, “The new facility so generously built by our community allows BACN to expand programs and services while welcoming a growing number of Neighbors. One important way to embrace the future is by honoring the past. As we celebrate 40+ years of BACN in our community, we honor the founding vision by ensuring BACN always remains the Caring Community of Neighbors Helping Neighbors.”

**Founding Churches**

- Blaine Christian, Arcadia
- First Congregational, Benzonia
- First Congregational, Thompsonville
- Frankfort & Elberta United Methodist
- Honor Congregational
- Lake Ann United Methodist
- St. Ann Catholic, Frankfort
- St. Philip’s Episcopal, Beulah
- Trinity Lutheran, Frankfort

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**Volunteer Corner**

Note: A collection of Jack’s latest rugs will be available for sale (proceeds to benefit BACN) at the annual Congregational Summer Assembly Arts and Crafts Fair, Wed., July 24th, on the CSA grounds two miles north of Frankfort.

“I was the receptionist on a day when a woman came into BACN just as we were getting ready to close. She stood in front of me with tears streaming down her face and said, “I never thought I would be at BACN asking for help. We have donated food but are in a rough time in our own lives at the moment. I can get by, but I need healthy food for my children.” Volunteers helped her gather what she needed from the food pantry and prepared to load her car. With more tears, she gratefully assured BACN that when she was able, she would again donate food.”

~Lynne, Long-time BACN Volunteer
We are thrilled to introduce our new Executive Director, Diane Mahoney! Diane comes to us as a results-driven professional with 30 years of experience developing innovative programs and leading nonprofit and philanthropic organizations. Since 2017, she has served as President and CEO of Bay Area Community Foundation in Bay City, MI.

Diane has received recognition and awards for her active involvement as a community leader. In addition to serving on several human service boards, she is currently Chair for the Saginaw Valley State University Board of Fellows and Special Program Chair of the Bay City Morning Rotary. Born and raised in southeastern Michigan, Diane graduated summa cum laude from Wayne State University with Bachelor of Public Affairs and Master of Public Administration degrees.

Diane is relocating to Thompsonville to join her husband Dr. Gerard Mahoney. An outdoor enthusiast, she enjoys biking, hiking, cross country skiing, resting by the water and reading. Diane will transition to BACN over the summer and be onsite full-time beginning September 30, 2024. We are excited to welcome Diane to the BACN family, and are excited to have such a strong leader embracing BACN’s mission and future.

Of her new role, Diane shared, “BACN is a strong, well-run organization that demonstrates its commitment to meeting the needs of the people in Benzie and Manistee counties—our Neighbors—on a daily basis. It is truly an honor to join the team of dedicated, compassionate and professional volunteers and staff who serve as the heart of this organization. Helping Neighbors and families thrive has been the work of BACN for 40 years, and we are just getting started.”

NEW SERVICE HOURS:
NEIGHBORS WEIGH IN
(Note: Names changed for privacy)

Mackenzie, single mother of one child: “The Tuesday hours have been perfect for me. I can save trips by picking up my daughter from daycare and coming straight to BACN. We go right home from BACN for a relaxing evening. My daughter can do homework while I make dinner with the pantry food. I work at Crystal Mountain. We’re getting busier again, but winter was very mild. We did not have a big ski season, which meant fewer work hours for me. I don’t know what we would have done without BACN.”

Matt: “I work from home, and struggle with some anxiety issues when there are crowds. For me, coming on a Tuesday evening is more comfortable. I take the Benzie Bus, which has fewer riders in the evening. And there aren’t as many shoppers in the pantry and clothing center at BACN on Tuesday nights.”

Lindsay, expectant mother: “I work 3rd shift, and on work days I only get to see my husband in the morning as I’m getting home and he is getting ready for his own job. BACN being open late on Tuesdays means I get to keep sleeping on my normal schedule that day (pretty important for me right now!) instead of having to wake up to make a pantry run, and then go back home to try to fall back asleep for a few hours before getting up again.”

ATTENTION PARENTS!
Mark your calendars for July 29, and call to register your children for the annual Benzie Back-to-School Event.
First Congregational Church, 901 Barber St., Benzonia, from 9 to 5.
We are excited to announce that the 14th Annual Summer Match has begun! The John L. Mulvaney Foundation is again challenging the community to match their generous summer gift. Each donation made between June 1 and August 31 will be matched dollar for dollar up to $50,000. The monies raised during the Summer Match directly support BACN Programs and Services, and represent a sizable portion of BACN's annual budget. With today's uncertain economy and the growing number of Neighbors being served, this opportunity has never been more important or appreciated. We are grateful to the Mulvaney's, and for each and every matching gift!