



# LAKE VERMILION CULTURAL CENTER

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## NEWSLETTER • SPRING & SUMMER • 2025

Board of Directors: Elaine McGillivray-Chair, Sandy Wallin-Vice Chair,  
Mary Batinich-President, Shelby Vaske-Secretary, Ryan Bajan-Treasurer  
Members at Large: Maddy Zupancich, Amy Banks, Tom Baldrice, Karel Winkelaar  
Administrative Assistant: Scarlet Stone

### Event Schedule • 2025

Visit our website for more info  
& event costs at:  
[vermilionculturalcenter.org](http://vermilionculturalcenter.org)

#### Wednesday, May 28

6 PM: The immigration/mining story by storyteller Gloria Anderson-Hegg and Pasty Feed.

#### Saturday, June 14 Midsummer

5 PM: Social Hour, Cash Bar, Silent Auction.  
6 PM: Dinner seating. Program follows.

#### Saturday, June 21

7 PM: Irene Hartfield Concert-popular local singer, songwriter, keyboardist.

#### Saturday, June 26

6 PM: Mandala Rock Painting by Di's Dots (Diana Magner). Supplies/snacks/bevs & wine provided. (Reservations req.)

#### Wednesday, July 9

7 PM: Northern Lights Music Festival Chamber Concert-Music for Cymbalom. Performed by Moldovan virtuoso Ivan Curtean. (Ticket info at: [northernlightsmusicfestival.org](http://northernlightsmusicfestival.org))

#### Tuesday, July 15

7 PM: Award winning author of *Tree Spirited Woman*, Colleen Baldrice, shares her inspirational story & discusses the writing process. Q & A session follows.

#### Wednesay, July 23

6:30 PM: Vintage & New Age Aprons—a story of women's history with author/designer, Mary Mulari, plus a Pie Social! Wear or bring an apron & a story to share.

**August** (Date TBD) Night Sky Singers: Songs of the Anishinaabeg.

#### Sunday, August 10

4 PM: Steve Solkela & Friends

#### Thursday, August 21

6:30 PM: Wine & Watercolor with Linda Smith. (Reservations req.)

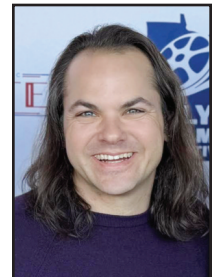
**September** (Date TBD) The Sectionals

For more information go to:  
[vermilionculturalcenter.org](http://vermilionculturalcenter.org)  
LV message at 218-753-4100

## Midsummer 2025

After the very successful Midsummer Memories benefit in 2024, it felt like the end of an era due to the retirement of Jan Kimes as writer, producer and director of the musical program. Was it time for a new format? With much consideration, the LVCC Board and Midsummer Committee decided to continue with the same general format as prior years. A survey sent to all who attended Midsummer last year showed that many enjoy the opportunity to dress up and like the variety-show dinner. Thus, on June 14, there will again be a dinner in the Herbert Lamppa Civic Center and a musical program across the street in St. Mary's Hall. Guests are encouraged to glam-up for the gala event.

However, there will be a few changes this year. The writer, producer, and director of the program, "Songs of the Journey," will be LVCC board member and longtime participant in the program Ryan Bajan. Ryan asks guests "to join us on an adventure across the Atlantic as we present songs from the immigration to Minnesota as well as unique pieces highlighting the diversity of cultural roots in our region." The show will feature regional talent, such as The Sectionals, members of the Choralaires, multi-talented Steve Solkela, as well as a community choir. Songs will range from popular Broadway tunes to old sea shanties centered around the immigrants' journey.



Ryan Bajan

There will also be a change in the silent auction. After researching what some other small non profits are doing, it was decided to present an online silent auction this year. An advantage of an online auction is participants can view the items and make bids even if they can't attend the event or are outside the area. The auction will last for several days, beginning on June 6 at 9 am CDT and ending the evening of Midsummer, June 14 at 6 pm. We will be using the website [www.32auctions.com/LVCC2025](http://www.32auctions.com/LVCC2025) where you will be able to set up a safe and secure account to view and bid on our amazing auction items. A QR code (pictured below) will also be available to access the website. Winners may pick up their items in the Halunen lobby at the LVCC after the evening performance on June 14 or have them shipped at their expense. There will still be a social hour and a smaller in-person silent auction inside the civic center before dinner. Another change is there will be a cash bar.

The live auction will stay the same. It will be held after dinner with comedic Steve Solkela calling the auction. Popular items will again be offered: A seven-night stay at an alpine chalet in France with room for eight people, a seven-night stay at a condo in Cabo San Lucas, two Minnesota Wild tickets, and other opportunities. Start getting your friends organized to bid on these fun items.

The Midsummer Committee, chaired by Jaynee Yocum, is excited to host the biggest fundraiser of the year for the LVCC in a way that is familiar with a few changes. Find more details in the enclosed invitation and watch the local papers for updates on the online and live auctions. We look forward to seeing many of you on June 14!

### Midsummer Silent Auction Bidding Information

We invite you to view and bid on items prior to the event  
on June 14. **Bidding begins June 6 at 9 AM**  
and ends **June 14 at 6 PM.**

Use QR code or link at: [32auctions.com/LVCC2025](http://32auctions.com/LVCC2025)



## Auction Winners Enjoy Travels & Activities



### A Family Stay at a Favorite French Chalet

Mike Indihar won a live auction item at Midsummer 2024 for a week's stay for eight at a chalet in the French Alps. Mike and his wife, Bergetta, decided to bring family and friends on this grand adventure. The chalet stay was donated by Elizabeth and Sean Furrh and will be offered again in the live auction at Midsummer 2025 on June 14. Gather your friends and family to start planning your bidding strategy!

*This photo was taken when they arrived in Milan to begin their journey. (From left) Mike Indihar, Roth Indihar, Jake Aune, Jo Baird, Bergetta Indihar, bus driver/guide Bruno Mortara, Bryan Baird, Ryan Indihar, and Rachel Indihar.*

### Script Reading Fun



Stages of the Range Players members (From left) Karel Winkelaar (hidden) and Pete Pellinen lead a motley crew in a script reading. John Yocum, Mike Indihar and Dan Peterson were among the performers. The Petersons had the winning bid for this hilarious event.

### Wood-Fired Pizza Party



Jeff & Linda Smith will again be offering a wood-fired pizza party for 4 to 6 at their cabin on Isle of Pines, Lake Vermilion. This was a popular item in the 2024 auction and we expect robust bidding again. The pizza is handmade and baked in an outdoor oven.

### Delicious Pie Making



Shelby Vaske, the Tower & Ely pie lady, offers a pie making session every year in the silent auction. She will do it for 4 persons in their kitchen or her own on Lake Vermilion. Each person takes home a pie! (From left) Carol Stratton, Shelby Vaske, Jaynee Yocum-Winner and Laurie Leonard. Not pictured Becky Peterson.

## LVCC Building History & Recent Project Update

When the rich deposit of Iron ore was discovered in Soudan, MN in the late 19th century, a vibrant community sprung up around it. In 1888, a group of English-speaking people founded the Episcopal Church, which they named Saint Christopher's. It later was changed to Saint Mary's and was known as the "Cousin Jack Church" to indicate that it's members were mostly Cornish, Welsh, Scottish, English, and Irish. Saint Mary's historic Church was originally built on the old road between Tower and Soudan. It remained an active Episcopal Church until about 2011 when it was deconsecrated and given to a group of people by the Episcopal Church of MN and a nonprofit was formed. In 2015, the building was moved to the current location and is now the LVCC. *by President-Mary Batinich*

It's been another busy year hosting many wonderful events as we continue to work hard on our efforts to complete the Cultural Center building. Over the past few years we have undergone a large-scale addition, had extensive exterior work done, and built a garage/carriage house. Despite all of this, we still have a lot of work to do to bring the building to the masterpiece it will become. This includes HVAC/electrical work, insulation, kitchen installation, as well as completion of an elevator with a shaft already built. We have received some grants and are working hard to secure the remaining needed financing for those essentials. We are forever grateful to our supporters over the years as we keep pushing forward to our vision.

*by Building Committee Chair-Amy Banks*



Above: A group of 38 Sunday School children and several teachers in the early 1920's dressed in their finery pose outside of St. Mary's Episcopal Church at its original location in Tower, MN.

**We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and are tax exempt. Please consider a donation or annual pledge to the Lake Vermilion Cultural Center and help bring our vision to completion.**  
[vermilionculturalcenter.org](http://vermilionculturalcenter.org)



(From left) Branden Taus as *The Mute*; Steve Solkela as the aging bachelor, *Uberto*; Jessica Moss as the scheming housemaid, *Serpina*

## ✦ A NIGHT AT THE OPERA ✦

On April 16, the LVCC kicked-off the season with Steve Solkela's production of the 1733 comic opera "La Serva Padona." The unconventional 40 minute production was cleverly updated by Solkela for a 21st century audience and was sung by professionally trained singers in Italian with an English translation provided. It was performed in two acts with an intermission that featured 3-rounds of Bingo and accordion music! The enthusiastic audience enjoyed the mix of opera, vaudeville and improv. comedy. Bringing this production to life fulfilled a long-held dream of Solkela.

(A repeat performance at LVCC is in the works for August)

## Welcoming Our Two New Board Members

At a recent annual reorganization meeting, the Lake Vermilion Cultural Center board welcomed Tom Baldrice and Karel Winkelaar to the Board of Directors. Both men have a wide variety of experience that will benefit the board, the LVCC, and the community.

**Tom Baldrice:** "I am thrilled to be joining the Lake Vermilion Cultural Center's Board of Directors." As the child of two lifelong music educators and advocates (Bob and Barb Baldrice), he has lived the LVCC mission statement of "enriching our communities through education and the arts by offering quality programming and providing opportunities to showcase the rich cultural heritage of the area." He said he is excited to help all the wonderful, dedicated people involved in this labor of love. After graduating from the University of Minnesota with a degree in Public Relations, (and a "minor" in marching band, he was a three year tuba section rank lieutenant), Tom returned to the Iron Range to launch a brand new radio station, "Alive & Kickin' Country, K100." After six years with the radio station, he moved into the record business. He spent four years in Atlanta as the Regional Promotion Manager for BNA Records before moving to Nashville to assume the Vice President of Promotion for BNA. He was in that role for nine years, and was then promoted to Vice President of Marketing of Sony Music Nashville. After four years in that position, he joined Average Joe's Records as the President of the label. He did that for two years and then moved back to the Iron Range and headed the promotion team for Show Dog Universal. After two years of traveling back and forth to Nashville, he exited the record business and returned to his radio roots. He has spent the past 10 years as the Corporate Country Brand Strategist for Midwest Communications, as well as doing daily afternoon radio shows on DUKE-FM in Duluth and Radio USA in Hibbing. He retired in December of 2024. Tom is a past Director of the Country Radio Broadcasters Board, the Academy of Country Music Board, the Leadership Music Board, and W.O. Smith School of Music/Nashville Board. He said he looks forward to bringing his passion for music and the arts to the LVCC and to working on the publicity/marketing and fundraising committees. Tom lives in Virginia with his wife Tracy.



(From left) LVCC Chair Elaine McGillivray, Tom Baldrice, President Mary Batinich, Karel Winkelaar, Secretary Shelby Vaske, Treasurer Ryan Bajan.

**Karel Winkelaar:** The LVCC also welcomed Karel Winkelaar to the Board of Directors. Karel brings a different and valuable set of experiences to the board. The part of the LVCC mission statement that resonates with Karel most is "showcasing the rich cultural heritage of the area." Karel has an immigrant background, coming to this country at age seven from the Netherlands. Karel then grew up in Aurora/Hoyt Lakes and lived and worked on the Iron Range for his entire life, while raising four sons. He worked for 32 years at Erie Mining Company/LTV as a supervisor. He also worked as a realtor and part owner of Vermilion Land Office for eight years. Currently, he works as a beloved bus driver for the Tower Schools, is a propane delivery driver, and a tour guide at the Soudan Underground Mine State Park. He said the stories of the immigrant miners he shares on his tours are fascinating to him, having come here as a member of an immigrant family. Recently, he became active in Stages of the Range Players as an actor and also serves on their board. Stages of the Range Players provides theater experiences and radio plays to underserved communities on the Iron Range. The LVCC was pleased to host two of their productions in the LVCC's St. Mary's Hall in 2023 and 2024. Karel has also served on the board of the North Ridge Community Credit Union. Karel looks forward to bringing more plays to the LVCC, creating programs on immigrant history, and helping shepherd St. Mary's Hall to completion. He will serve on the program and building committees. Karel lives in Tower with his wife, Brenda, who is co-owner of Sulu's Espresso Cafe.

## ◦ BOARD BITS ◦

### *A Farewell & Thank You to Joel & Jan*



Joel

A message from Joel Wurl, "I want to thank the entire LVCC Board for the beautiful plaque recognizing my service with the organization. I was sincerely very touched by this lovely gesture, which made me feel all the more proud to have been a part of this inspiring group and mission. Warmest wishes."



Jan & Elaine

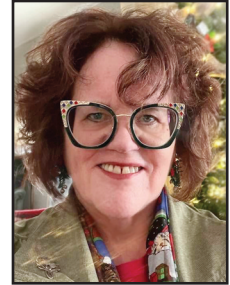
LVCC Chair Elaine McGillivray presented a plaque of appreciation to Jan Kimes for her years of service as a member of the LVCC Board of Directors. Thank you, Jan!



### *Interesting Tidbit*

Board Chair Elaine McGillivray's father, aunt & grandmother immigrated to the United States by steamship in 1921 to reunite with her grandfather who was working in the mines.

### *Thank You to Scarlet Stone*



Scarlet

The LVCC family wants to give a loud shout out to Administrative Assistant, Scarlet Stone, for her amazing three years of outstanding work. Her many duties include office/money management, correspondence, database/grant work and assistance with publicity and events. A simple thank you seems inadequate for everything she does to keep our project going forward. Scarlet wears many hats and is also employed by the Timberjay Newspaper as a graphic designer, sales representative and a columnist.

### *Welcome Back Ann*

The LVCC building and grounds committee just got the welcome news that Ann Flannagan is going to be spending some time in the Tower-Soudan area and has volunteered to work on the grounds of the Lake Vermilion Cultural Center. Many of you know her as one of the spark plugs that refurbished the Historical Society train at the Depot in Tower. She and the late Jim Macomber spent several years giving quality help and leadership to the venue. She will be happy to have others help her with planting, weeding, watering, and generally keeping our gardens and flowers in good shape around our building on Main Street.



**If you want to help with the gardening team, call Ann at 218-753-6060 and bring your gardening gloves.**

*The Lake Vermilion Cultural Center is dedicated to community enrichment through education and the arts by offering quality programming and providing opportunities to showcase the rich cultural heritage of the area.*

## **Donations: Late November 2024 - Late April 2025**

***Included are persons donating to the following Memorials: Debbie McGillivray Hanela, Ray Hiltunen, Ann Cownie, Judy Pearson and a Commemoration for Elaine McGillivray***

American Online Giving Fund  
Rolf & Laurie Anderson  
Greg Archibald  
Amy Banks  
Kent & Amanda Adams  
Mike Skorich & Mary Batinich  
Edward & Peggy Bonach  
Kathy Boyer  
Kenneth & Alison Brown  
Greta & Dan Burant-Good Ol' Days  
Susan Coler  
Peter & Brenda Duyan  
David & Alison Edgerton  
Karen Engman Revocable Trust

Lorraine K Erickson  
Peter Esala  
Jill Fagerlund  
Dennis & Catherine Farley  
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Robert & Colleen Lepper  
Kathy Meyerle  
Dennis Mattson & Pam Canelake Mattson  
Dennis & Sandra McCallum  
Erin McGillivray  
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Steve Wilson & Mary Shedd  
Michael & Dawn Skorich Foundation  
Nancy Sweatt  
John & Pat Urick  
Sandy & David Wallin  
John & Jaynee Yocum

***We try to be as thorough as possible with compiling our lists of donors. However, if we missed or misspelled your name please let us know so we can update our database. Thank you for your understanding.***