

# The Arnold Sentinel

“Serving the South Loup River Valley”

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Legion Post 130 members (from left) Mike Harvey, Darrell Sheets and Charles Foran are shown standing by an almost full 30' trailer load of scrap metal. The Legion's scrap metal collection project—going on for almost ten years now—has literally saved the local Legion building from closing long ago. (Kristi Dvorak photos)

## Legion Members Go Above and Beyond to Keep Post 130 Solvent

### Over \$90,000.00 Raised Through Scrap Metal Project Since 2007

By Janet Larreau

Back in 2007, Arnold's American Legion Post 130 was completely broke. With the Legion building in bad need of repairs, members had to come up with some money—and a lot of it. Darrell Sheets had an idea that eventually turned things around to where the post is

now solvent.

“I told Mike (Harvey) that we need to start saving and selling scrap metal,” said Darrell. “Moe Sanford was nice enough to let us use land out east of town at the old Gunther service station, and we took advantage of the offer. We hauled semi-load after semi-load out of there

and just continued to do it. We hauled over 500 ton right from the start.”

At the beginning of the project, 69 vehicles were hauled out.

“People brought them from all over, and we even hauled vehicles in from out of town,” Mike said. “We were a little dumb at first. We used

to stockpile it, and that created a lot more work. Now when a trailer is full, we immediately take it.”

Charles Foran, Jim Weinman, the late Marion Scott and the late Kendall McDowell all helped Darrell and Mike get the project rolling. As the money started coming in, the project became



Darrell and Mike scrap metal onto the trailer at A-1 Auto. The pair spend a part of each day working on collecting and sorting the metal.

more self-sufficient. Legion was able to purchase its own truck and 30' trailer from Marion Scott to haul the scrap.

Improvements also started on the Legion building. New flooring, windows and doors were installed and new tin was applied on the exterior. Members wanted to clean up the area around the building, so Legion purchased the old house just to the north and tore it down to make room for more parking. The project also helped pay for new trees.

To date, Darrell and Mike are happy to report that way over 1,000 tons of scrap has been sold, and over \$90,000.00 has been collected since the start of the project.

“The prices have varied over the years. They're low right now at \$35.00 to \$45.00 a ton. In good years it's been as much as \$200.00 a ton. Last year it really went down,” said Mike.

Collecting and transporting the scrap is a volunteer effort, and all money collected goes to the local post. Sometimes, the numbers don't work out that well when all is said and done.

“One time we took a load to Kearney, collected \$116.00 and used \$66.00 worth of gas. It takes a lot of time. Darrell and I spend a little bit every day working it and some days, most of the day. Aluminum has to be separated from iron and copper and brass have to be separated. If we were charging minimum wage, we'd lose money,” said Mike.

The scrap trailer is parked on Mike's property in the north part of town. The community has been great about dropping off their scrap, and everyone is encouraged to use the trailer instead of placing it in the dumpsters. Mike said they have went dumpster diving for scrap but would rather not.

Both men agree that if it weren't for the scrap project, the Legion building would be closed by now—as many are across the state.

“It's a community project and helps clean up the environment. A lot of people are really envious (of our project),” said Mike. “Some Legion buildings are in bad shape. A couple posts tried, but they didn't have enough people to help. It takes dedication—someone who is committed.”

### Legion Posts Struggle to Find New Members

The reason many Legion buildings are closing is due to declining membership and lack of money. Membership at the Arnold post was 100 at one time and is now down to 55. Of those members, only maybe ten are active, and the average age is 70. Many simply aren't capable of helping due to age and health.

“That makes it difficult to maintain a building,” said Mike. “Most of the dues go to the state or nation. We get \$5.00 a person. We try to recruit all the time. We try to get anyone who is young and been in the service. It's hard to recruit some young guys. They just can't get away to do the volunteer work. We need them to step up and take on the leadership role.”

Darrell and Mike said Josh Flint, Eric Nelson and Bill Davis are some of the young vets they would like to see join. Jeff Preston is currently the youngest member of Post 130. John Phillips is the current commander.

The local Legion post sponsors Boys State and the Junior Law Cadet program for girls or boys, plans Veterans Day and Memorial Day programs, participates in parades, helps with the Sandhills Open Road Challenge and tries to be involved in community activities. Members are also involved in funeral services for veterans. The local post has been pretty lucky to get 10 to 12 lined up for those services.

“Our big function is supporting the youth,” said Darrell. Mike added, “If anyone knows a veteran living in the area who is not a member, please ask them to join us.”



Arnold fourth and fifth graders gather on a hillside in the Devil's Den area in late October while sending off a travel bug during their GPS study. Fifth graders sent out the travel bug “Santa Paws” and fourth graders sent out “Chewie.” (Courtesy photo)

## Two Classes Combine for GPS Study

Before the snow and cold arrived, Arnold fourth and fifth graders were outdoors studying the global positioning system with their teachers Berni Crow and Kevin Neth.

Mrs. Crow gives her fourth graders this hands-on experience each year, but last year's fourth graders missed out, and the two classes were combined in 2016. To bring this “hands on”

experience alive, the students do a mock geocaching experience at the Arnold Recreation Area. Then later in the school year, the students take a quick trip up to the Devil's Den area and send off a travel bug while searching for a real cache—“Devil's Den.”

Mrs. Crow explained that a travel bug is a trackable item that has a coded tag, like army dog tags. Geocachers

move travel bugs from one cache to another.

Eleven past fourth grade classes have travel bugs all over the world. “H20,” a 4” hamster released in 2009, has traveled 56,048 miles and is presently in Germany. “South Loup Bobcat,” released in 2011 by this year's sophomores, has traveled 32,873 miles and is also presently overseas in the UK. “Bubbles,” a fish released by

this year's juniors has traveled 25,429 miles, including cache visits in several posts in Hawaii and is now back in Missouri.

“We even had a travel bug make it to Australia,” said Mrs. Crow.

The best way to understand the global positioning system is to study what it can do while playing this online game that gets people outdoors.

## Sentinel Office Moving Temporarily

The Sentinel office will be moving to its temporary home in the south office space of Hotel Custer on Thursday, January 12, as renovation begins on the 1920s building. If all goes well, staff will move back into the newly-remodeled building in about two months.

The office will be closed on Thursday during the move.