

# The Arnold Sentinel

“Serving the South Loup River Valley”

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## Arnold Freshman Determined to Bring Dolly Parton Imagination Library to Custer County

By Amanda Wehnes

For as long as he can remember, Arnold freshman Eli Rogers has loved Dolly Parton. Her music, her rags-to-riches story, and especially her philanthropy and giving heart. So when he decided to bring the opportunities of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL) to Custer County children, it was an easy project for the community to get behind.

“It just looked like such a great program,” said Rogers. “I said ‘Heck!’ I can support Custer County and Dolly Parton!”

The Dolly Parton Imagination Library is a literary foundation that provides age-appropriate books at no cost to children ages 5 and younger in areas where there is a local sponsoring group. The foundation pays for half of the price of the books and postage for each child, and the local sponsoring group pays the other half. For \$50 a year, children in a qualified area can receive 12 age-appropriate books each year, or one book a month. Through the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, more than one million books are sent to children in the United States, Canada, Australia, Ireland, and the United Kingdom.

Rogers is a member of the Central Nebraska Interact Club, a Rotary organization for youth. He solicited the help of Interact sponsor Nicole Badgley and Rotary member Becky Dailey to get the ball rolling. His first task was to contact the Dolly Parton Imagination Library to start the application process for becoming a local sponsor group.

Local sponsor groups need to have a 501(c)(3) registered non-profit status established or have an existing group partner with them, they must have a bank account and keep financial records, provide funds for the project, and provide the marketing and communications associated. It took quite a bit of persistence from Rogers to convince the Dolly Parton Imagination Library that a 15-year-old student could and would commit to this large of a project.

“Eli really wanted to get this set up for every little person in Custer county. He was disappointed that Custer County was not on the list for parents to sign up their kids,” said Badgley. “He wanted our youngest kids to enjoy reading through the excitement of receiving a book every month to read with their parents.”

The next step to becoming a local sponsor group is to secure funding for the project. In order to be able to provide the opportunity for the free books for all children of Custer County, Rogers estimated he would need at least \$5,000 for the first few years. The end goal for the project would be to raise \$15,000 and be able to fund books for multiple years.

“I would like to raise enough money to give books to all the kids in Custer County,” said Rogers. “I don’t know if it will be in one year, three years, or more.”

Fundraising efforts for the project have been underway for more than a month and they’ve already raised about \$5,000 - just short of their first goal. Just last week, the National Junior Honor Society at Arnold Schools held a fundraiser for the project with “Break The



Courtesy Photo

Eli Rogers, who has been working with the Rotary Interact group to bring the Dolly Parton Imagination Station to Custer County, holds a presentation check made out for \$656.00 - the amount raised during “Break The Rules Day” at Arnold Public Schools. The Junior Honor Society 9th grade group organized the fundraiser to benefit the station.

Rules Day” where staff and students were encouraged to break a rule at the school, such as teachers wearing shorts or students wearing hats in exchange for a donation. They raised more than \$650 that day.

Seeing his project come to fruition has been fulfilling for Eli.

“I always knew it would kick up and people would donate,” said Rogers. “We were prepared

to have a limited sign-up, but we didn’t want to do that.”

There is a bit of paperwork left to complete for the Postal Service, but Rogers hopes to have the books available for Custer County in April or May.

Rogers knows he couldn’t have gotten this far with his project without the help of Dailey to set up the bank account and Badgley for “putting up with me.”

But Badgley says the credit all goes to Rogers. “I think people should know how hard Eli worked to get this set up,” she said.

Donations for the project can

be sent to the Arnold Community Foundation, c/o Central NE Interact Club, 508 N Walnut St., Arnold, NE 69120 and include “Interact’s Dolly Project” or dropping them off at First State Insurance in Arnold.

Donations can also be made online at [www.nebcomm-found.org](http://www.nebcomm-found.org) and searching “Arnold Community Fund” and including the designation of “Imagination Library Fund” or the Dolly Parton Imagination Library website at [www.imaginationlibrary.com/usa](http://www.imaginationlibrary.com/usa) and donate to the Custer County, Nebraska project.

## AVFD Presents Annual Awards



2022 AVFD award winners (from left): EMT of the Year Tammy Weinman, Fireman of the Year Robbi Smith, Runner-Up Fireman of the Year Gregg Tickle, Runner-Up EMT of the Year Cassidy DeLosh.

The Arnold Volunteer Fire Department held its annual supper and awards banquet on Friday, February 24, at the American Legion Hall.

Fire department members and their spouses/guest were in attendance. Other special guest were rural board member Larry Ross and retired members, Shelley Smith, Mike Gunther and his wife Barb Gunther, and Nancy Cool and her husband Ron Cool.

The excellent meal was provided by Casey and Nicole Cozad. The junior class helped serve the meal.

This year's speaker was Mike Bailey, paramedic and EMS instructor from Ansley, and his wife Laura accompanied him. Mike gave a motivating presentation about being the best in your field of EMS, taking care of each other and promoting the organization.

Awards for 2022 were presented to Tammy Weinman EMT of the Year, Robbi Smith

Fireman of the Year, Gregg Tickle Runner Up Fireman of the Year, and Cassidy DeLosh Runner Up EMT of the Year.

Years of Service pins were given to Cam Meyer 5 years, Brock Dailey 20 years, Tom Dennis 30 years and Susan Nelson 35 years.

A swearing in ceremony was held for new members, Dalton Swopes and Amanda Wehnes, after completing their probation period. Amanda will also be completing her EMT class in May.

Tammy Weinman was presented with an EMT bag for her efforts in writing and receiving grants for the department for a powerload cot, 12 Lead and Lucas device. Andrew Tickle also thanked the rural board for helping fund what the grants do not cover on the new equipment and always allowing the department to have the equipment needed to be the best in our field and for our community.



Courtesy Photos

Fire Chief Andrew Tickle swears in new members, Dalton Swopes and Amanda Wehnes, after completing their probation period, at the annual supper and awards banquet on February 24.