

The Arnold Sentinel

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She’s Got a Passion for Wrestling

Jessica Fletcher steps in to assist with A-M girls’ program

By Janet Larreau

“It has always been in my blood.”

This was Arnold resident Jessica Fletcher’s response when asked why she accepted the assistant girls’ wrestling coach position for Anselmo-Merna in October of 2023. This is the first year for A-M to have a high school girls’ wrestling program, and an assistant for the two girls going out was needed. Head Coach Caleb Franklin was given Jessica’s name by her husband, Matt, and with her undying passion for the sport, she accepted.

Wrestling is indeed in Jessica’s blood. A 1998 graduate of A.H.S., she is the daughter, sister, and niece of several wrestlers with the well-known last name of Phillips – many of whom were involved in the beginning years of the sport at Arnold High School.

“I was never allowed to wrestle, because I was a girl, and I wasn’t allowed to wrestle boys, except when my brothers used me as a guinea pig for moves, throws, turns, and pinning combinations.”

The wrestling history for the Phillips boys goes way back to 1970, when Jessica’s father, John Phillips, was Arnold’s first placer at state at 130 lbs. He helped coach during his senior year for high school and junior high. He was then the assistant coach for Arnold after returning from Vietnam from 1972 to 1994. He has continued to help coach club or youth wrestling from 1976 to the present.

Jessica’s uncle, Paul Phillips, placed 3rd at state in 1973 at 145 lbs.

Another uncle, Jim Phillips, placed 1st at state in 1973 at 98 lbs., was 3rd at state in 1974 at 112 lbs., and brought home another 3rd place medal in 1975 at 132 lbs. Jim went on to



Jessica (Phillips) Fletcher coaches from the bench during last weekend’s girls’ wrestling tournament at Ainsworth. Pictured in the inset is Jessica with her team of wrestlers: Jessica Carr at 140 lbs., and Macey Flynn at 155 lbs. - Courtesy photos

wrestle for McCook College from 1975 to 1977 and wrestled for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln from 1977 to 1979 and was a member of that team when he was killed in a farm accident outside of Arnold.

Next in line came Jessica’s brothers. Ty Phillips placed 4th at state in 1992 at 135 lbs., and Shawn placed 6th at state in 1993 at 160 lbs. Shawn returned to compete at state in 1994 at 171 lbs., placing 3rd.

Jessica said that a lot of the moves she knows are

from her childhood experience.

“Living in wrestling, day in and day out, you become familiar with what is going on and how to execute those moves,” she said. “My most favorite move has always been the Cradle, but some of the names of the most common ones are Single Leg Takedown, Half, Sprawl, Arm Drag, Whizzer, Switch, Cross Face, and Ankle Pick, just to name a few.”

I absolutely love that girls now have a platform

in wrestling,” said Jessica. “The growth has been phenomenal. I believe that is a testament to the popularity of the sport. If wrestling would have been an option for me, I would have most definitely wrestled.”

Being an assistant coach requires quite a bit of traveling to practices and meets, but Jessica says it is definitely worth it. Her goals for the team are to generate a passion for wrestling, committing to something greater than the individuals them-

selves, to have the girls gain a greater knowledge of wrestling, and to improve each day.

“Wrestling requires a person to believe in themselves and to commit to give it your all no matter the outcome. There are so many life lessons taught through the sport of wrestling. We are just trying to create a culture of personal growth for each wrestler and to increase the interest for the future of the team,” she said.



Chamber’s officers for 2024 display the new t-shirts that members will be wearing to multiple events that the organization plans to host in the coming year. Pictured are, from left: Secretary Tammy Weinman; Vice-President Dena Mills, Treasurer Becky Dailey, and President April Tickle. - Debbie Connelly photo

Another Eventful Year Ahead

Towards the end of January, Chamber mailed out its annual membership flyer, reminding businesses and residents it was dues time and listing how income from dues and fundraisers are spent.

During the year, Chamber sponsors movies, radio and newspaper advertisements, the Chili Cook-Off, Easter Egg Hunt, flower barrel project, Halloween Carnival, a turkey give-away, Christmas Around Town, the Chamber Bucks Christmas promotion, and helps with community clean-up.

2024 community event dates follow (an asterisk means Chamber does not sponsor the event):

- March 2 - Chili Cook-Off
- March 23 - Easter Egg Hunt
- April (TBA) - Community Clean-Up Day
- May 25 - Arnold High School Alumni *
- June 1 - Garage sales

- July 4 - Fireworks *
- July 12-13 - Devil’s Den Bike Rally *
- August 10 - SORC barbe-cue
- September (TBA) - Arnold Fall Festival *
- September 20-21 - Junk Jaunt *
- October 24 - Halloween Carnival
- November / December (TBA) - Christmas Around Town

You can support Chamber by paying dues, assisting with or chairing events, providing food for events, or watering the flower barrels throughout spring and summer. Chamber meets the fourth Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m., at Touch of Grace Massage Therapy and Spa building. More information can be found on Chamber’s Facebook page or by contacting Becky Dailey, who is accepting dues and/or donations.

Science Class Tests Their Own DNA

Arnold School one of few in state to have gel electrophoresis machine

By Gracie Neth, Sentinel Intern

ARNOLD - Arnold’s Applied Sciences class had a Forensic Fun Day on January 19. The participating students tested their own DNA for the PTC gene - a gene in which people can taste a specific chemical.

The students first prepared the agarose gels which were the base for the DNA to be tested in. While the gel was setting, students took samples of their own DNA. After the DNA was centrifuged, students separated and replicated the DNA by rotating the samples in three different temperatures of water for 45 second intervals - a process that was repeated 35 times.

After the students ate lunch donated by Mrs. Sandager, they cut the DNA. Finally, the students were able to run the DNA in the gel electrophoresis machine. This machine was purchased with one-third grants, one-third student fundraising by selling soaps and plants, and one-third donated by Ron Cool, who

stopped by during the testing.

“I love seeing the kids get to have real life hands-on experience in the field of biology. It’s so important for kids to gain experience with lab skills,” said science teacher Mrs. Sandager.

After finishing using the gel electrophoresis machine, the students dyed the gels so they could see the results of their DNA testing. If there were two lines, the testing showed they had the gene and if there was only one line, they didn’t have the gene. To double check their work, students had to taste PTC paper.

“We definitely should do this every forensics class. It was very beneficial to learn how they test DNA in a lab and see if we had the PTC gene,” said Junior Réalta Leach.

The Applied Biology class does this lab every other year. Arnold is one of the few schools in Nebraska to have access to a gel electrophoresis machine. This machine is used by scientists to solve crimes from DNA evidence.



Harmony Borah and Réalta Leach are shown micropipetting their DNA into a test tube. - Gracie Neth photo