

# The Arnold Sentinel

“Serving the South Loup River Valley”

THURSDAY, AUGUST 22, 2024

CUSTER COUNTY, ARNOLD, NEBRASKA 69120 (USPS 032480) SINGLE COPY: 75 CENTS VOLUME 108, NUMBER 11



APS Head Cook Rose Bierman serves up chicken strips and mac 'n cheese to the kindergartners on the first day of school. - Debbie Connelly photos



Crystal Hanna-Miles has signed on as the new assistant cook.

## Powering Through the Day

### School offers free meals to all K-12 students

By Janet Larreau

The hallways of Arnold Public Schools came back to life on August 15, with students finding their way around and re-adjusting from summer break. Head Cook Rose Bierman and new assistant cook Crystal Hanna-Miles were up early, providing a

breakfast of combo bars, and later on, they started the year off right with a favorite - chicken strips and mac 'n cheese - to help the kids power through their day. The menus will be mostly standard-fare this school year, with one big difference - students will be eating free of charge. Parents got the word on

the first day of school that APS would be offering free breakfast and lunch for full-time K-12 students for the 2024-2025 school year through the school's participation in the USDA's Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). The eligibility to offer free meals is based on the percentage of families that qualify for free or reduced

meals in the district, and to offset the cost, APS will receive a higher reimbursement rate from the state, along with its current balance in the food services account. Superintendent Joel Morgan said that no levied local property tax dollars are needed to fund the opportunity this year. "This will be a pretty

big benefit for families," said Mr. Morgan. "Several school districts in the state were eligible; others may be eligible, but choose not to because of the cost. The way we are structured, we get a higher rate of reimbursement. We've built up enough in the hot lunch account, and we've been fortunate with reimbursements and

grants in the past. We try to be cognizant of food costs and what we're eligible to order through state commodities. Another big part is keeping student balances in the positive." The program is for the 2024-2025 school year only and will be reviewed on an annual basis to determine eligibility and local costs.

## Walking Trail Grant, Vets Memorial Among Meeting Agenda Items

Village Board members heard the AEDC director's update and had several agenda items to consider at their regular meeting held on August 19. Clerk Patricia Lambert reported for AEDC Director Cheryl Carson that a grant application has been submitted to the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (NDED) for a trail from Old Mill Park to the Arnold Lake, Campground and Recreation Area. The

amount requested was for \$831,645.00. In her report, Carson said the entire projected budget for the trail is \$875,009.00. It was first estimated to be around \$750,000.00, but there is a possibility that the project may require an additional 200 ft. bridge footage. The adjustment drove the cost higher, factoring in final fence estimates, acquisition costs, attorney fees and administrative costs. Funds from the Edna B. Peterson (\$38,364.00) and

the value of land donated by Robbi and Shelley Smith (\$5,000.00) would be used as cash match contributions. Eighteen support letters were received from community members and organizations. **Veterans Memorial** Representing the American Legion, Mike Harvey and Don Olson were at the meeting regarding the

Veterans Memorial Project. After hearing their request, board members gave them permission to get started on the project, doing dirt work, pouring the concrete pad, and tapping into the electric system for the memorial's lights. The memorial will be located at the intersection of Highway 92 and 40. Board members also discussed and voted to move the curb to the east to make a handicap accessible concrete parking spot for the memorial. **Tree Project** Board members agreed to sign the Nebraska UCF IRA Project agreement at the request of Tree Board

Chairperson Mary Becker. Becker said the agreement is for a grant that the Village was awarded from the Nebraska Forest Service (NFS). Through the agreement, NFS agrees to reimburse the Village up to \$15,740.00 for eligible costs associated with implementing the Arnold Rotary Tree Project. Becker also said that the Tree Board's application to the National Forest Service (NFS) for the Free Trees for Fall grant was approved. NFS had 56 applications from western Nebraska, with requests exceeding 500 trees. At the time of the meeting, Becker said she didn't know

how many trees or the species that the Village will receive. The trees will be planted at the Arnold Recreation Area. **Comments from the floor** Don Olson mentioned that the county might have a historical bridge that the Village could use for the walking trail. Doug DeLaune was directed to check into the bridge. Mary Becker thanked the Board for keeping the pool open for an additional two weeks. **In other business, the Board:** See MEETING AGENDA, Page 6

## APS Welcomes New Pre-School Teacher

### Easy-To-Miss



Both residents and visitors to Arnold have been enjoying the many variety of flowers and grasses planted in the Chamber-sponsored downtown barrels. A closer look at the *Sentinel's* flower barrel last week resulted in spotting a praying mantis. This enigmatic, large bug camouflages itself so well, that it is rarely seen, but may be all around us. Was this bug a walking stick or a praying mantis? A quick search on Google revealed that it was, indeed, a mantis - one of only three of the large species found in Nebraska. Most escape notice because of how well they can blend into their environment. In this case, the *Sentinel's* mantis was bright green, and an hour later it had turned brown and was swaying back and forth. It's a reminder to slow down and take a closer look at the wonders of nature. Sometimes they're easy to miss.

Brittany Payne is one of three new teachers who has signed contracts to teach at APS this year. She welcomed two groups of excited preschoolers to her classroom last Thursday morning and afternoon. It's an age group she's familiar with. She taught preschool at Jefferson Elementary in North Platte for five years and in Valentine for four years. "I was so excited to be offered a job in Arnold because I miss the small school feeling in the community. I cannot thank everyone enough for their hospitality and welcome," she said. Mrs. Payne currently lives in Dunning with husband Eric, who owns a well drilling business in Purdum with his father. The couple has two foster sons that they hope to adopt soon. They also have five dogs, and many chickens, ducks, and pheasants. A graduate of Shoreland Lutheran High School

in Somers, Wisconsin, she went on to earn her Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education from Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota. She then received her Master's in Early Childhood Education from Capella University in Minneapolis, Minnesota. "For the longest time, I always thought I was going to grow up to be a zoologist, but my senior year in high school, I woke up from a dream in which I was a teacher, and I have not looked back once," she said. One of Mrs. Payne's goals is for her students to love coming to school each and every day. "I want each child to know they are loved and cared for the moment they step into my classroom. Each student is different and unique, and I want to embrace them and help them be the best person they can be," she said.



New Arnold teacher Brittany Payne welcomed preschoolers to her classroom on August 15. - Debbie Connelly photo