

The Arnold Sentinel

“Serving the South Loup River Valley”

THURSDAY, JANUARY 30, 2025

CUSTER COUNTY, ARNOLD, NEBRASKA 69120

(USPS 032480)

SINGLE COPY: 75 CENTS

VOLUME 108, NUMBER 34

Movie Buyer Makes Life Easier for Rialto Theatre Volunteer

January marks one year since contracting with Joe Garel



It's all about movies... From his office in L.A., Joe Garel buys movies for 46 theaters across the U.S., including Arnold's Rialto Theatre. - Courtesy photo

By Janet Larreau

Last January, Rialto Theatre manager Mary Becker turned one of her hardest jobs over to a professional, and as far as buying movies, it's been smooth sailing ever since. “Folks probably don't have a good understanding of all the technical pieces of running the theater, especially of all the things that can go wrong. It is complex to learn the business. Turning the movie buying to a professional totally makes the theater business so much easier to learn and run it,” said Becker. Becker started booking movies in March of 2017, taking over for Connie Nansel. The volunteer job required identifying movies that were available for the time frame, watching all of the trailers, reading reviews, and contacting the movie distributor to schedule the movie. The

time it took ranged from 5-8 hours a month. “There was definitely pressure to select the best movie,” said Becker. “I made a practice of rotating genres. While only 26 movies get scheduled for a year, it was not uncommon to review 150 to 200 movies during the year. Patty Lamberty and I worked as a team to select the movies.” All of that changed in January of 2024, when Becker had “Willy Wonka” advertised as the upcoming movie. Usually, she had the movie booked at least a week or two in advance, but it was over the holiday season, so she was not initially concerned that the movie distributor did not respond to her original email requesting to schedule the movie. Eventually, she figured out that the contact person and email must have changed, and after trying every way possible

to contact the distributor, she started calling around to other theaters in the area. “I talked to the theater manager in Imperial. He told me about his ‘movie buyer,’ Joe. I didn't even know a movie buyer was a job title. I called Joe in a panic. He instantly took control of the situation, scheduled the movie and had the hard drive air expressed to Arnold. The movie played at 7:00 p.m. on Friday night,” she said. From “Willy Wonka” on, Joe Garel has been the Rialto's movie buyer. From his home in Los Angeles, California, Garel's privately held company, Western Film Services, works directly with the movie studios and the exhibitors to program movies for 46 theaters from California to North Carolina. As a buyer, he usually watches the movies that are available in ad-

vance of the release to get an understanding of who the audience is. Then, after he sees the film, he does an analysis of the film to come up with the locations and dates the film will play at each theater. He then contacts the studios to confirm play dates and negotiate the terms of the box office which the theater splits with the studio. Once the terms are agreed on, the movie is confirmed, and the theater can start promoting the film that they will be playing. He has brought in several first run films into the Rialto, but since it is a single screen theater, Garel and Becker try to play a range of films that they were not able to bring in on the break. Typically, he tries to bring in the bigger titles on first run and when the calendar

See MOVIE BUYER, page 2



After receiving an upcoming movie on hard drive, Mary Becker scans it in to play at the Rialto Theatre. She shares projectionist duties with another volunteer, Debbie Connelly.

Fourth Generation In Industry Is Passionate About Movies

Joe Garel has been a movie buyer for 11 years and in the industry for 28 years. He's 4th generation in the movie business. His great-grandfather, Charles Klein, opened his first theater in Deadwood, South Dakota, in the early 1900's. His grandfather, Richard Klein, continued in his father's footsteps and ran several theaters throughout South Dakota and Colorado. His father, David Garel, worked for Sony Pictures where he was the general sales manager and ran the distribution team in the 90's to 2000's. Joe followed in his footsteps and got into the business where he worked for SONY, MGM and The Weinstein Company, where he released two Best Pictures at the Academy Awards and 100's of other titles over the course of 13 years. He said he hopes that one day, his daughter Charlie will be the 5th generation. He is passionate about movies. “I love that movies offer anybody the opportunity to get away for two hours and see stories that inspire you, make you laugh, cry, be scared, or fall in love,” he said. “It is the cheapest form of entertainment out there, and experiencing a film

play on the big screen is magical. You can't replicate it at home, and the communal experience is one of the reasons it is so special. Films live on through our entire lifetimes. People go on their first dates to the movies and see a certain film. That couple then goes on to get married and will revisit that film they watched on their first date for the rest of their lives. Or seeing a special film like “Jurassic Park” when it came out. We had never seen special effects like that before and seeing dinosaurs look so real was nothing short of amazing. Laughing with other viewers makes the film funnier. The smell of popcorn or adding M&M's to that popcorn to enhance the flavor is so much fun. It's like going on a mini vacation.” Garel went on to say that movie theaters have struggled to come back since the pandemic because of lack of product and competing with home entertainment. This year is going to be the comeback year, though. The calendar is packed with big titles almost every weekend, and we are entering a new golden age of cinema in the years to come.

Breaking Through - A.V.F.D. Hosting Fire Fighters 1 Class



Andrew Tickle breaks through a temporary wall at one of the Firefighter 1 sessions held in January. Hosted by the Arnold Volunteer Fire Department, the classes started on December 5 and will end around March 2025. The blended learning class is put on by the Nebraska State Fire Marshal's Training Division.



Tickle crawls through the prop that represents a standard wall stud structure inside a typical house. Volunteers have also been taking classes outdoors, practicing with ropes, ladders, hoses and extinguishers. - AVFD photos