

The Arnold Sentinel

“Serving the South Loup River Valley”

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It’s Like Winning the Lottery... Village awarded \$208,271 NSA Grant

By Janet Larreau

The Village of Arnold was recently awarded a \$208,271.00 Community Forestry Infrastructure grant from the Nebraska State Arboretum (NSA). The grant was part of \$10 million in grant funds awarded to NSA in 2024 by the USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry program.

Arnold Tree Board member and grant writer Mary Becker said she was hopeful that the grant request would be fully funded. She knew that the proposal was well written and followed the guidelines. The amount of research required before starting to write the grant was challenging. She had to ask the questions of, (1) What were the needs and wants of Arnold residents? (2) What did the community need to increase its shade canopy and increase its tree diversification? and (3) Were residents interested in the project?

“I did a lot of listening and talking to various people,” she said. “With the help of the Nebras-

ka Forest Service and Village employees, Tory Edwards, Eric Holmberg, and Ethan Furne, we did an inventory of trees in Arnold. This included identifying tree species and each tree’s overall health. This was done for all the trees in Arnold on both public lands and private property. The second hardest thing was projecting ahead for the 3-year grant. It took vision to look ahead and plan for what our community wants and needs are for the future.”

She went on to say that the unique thing about this grant is that it allows work to be done on public lands and private property. In keeping with the guidelines of the grant, during each of the three years, there will be trees removed and planted all around the community. In Year 1, there will be 39 new trees planted and 22 trees removed. In Year 2, there will be 39 trees planted and 21 trees removed. In year 3, there will be 52 trees planted and 15 trees removed. This activity will encompass residential homes, businesses, Allen City

Park, Old Mill Park, the Arnold Recreation Area, the cemetery, churches, the American Legion, the Veterans Memorial, Carroll Street Courts, and the school.

In addition to removing trees and planting new trees, the grant funding provides for: (a.) A yearly workshop put on by the Nebraska Forest Service to teach residents how to prune trees and other timely information; (b.) A drip system for trees planted on public lands, such as new trees in the cemetery, the ARA and Old Mill Park; (c.) An annual 3rd grade Arbor Day Program put on by the Nebraska Forest Service.

It is the intention to start work in late fall of 2025. “Al Bishop said it best, ‘This is like Arnold won the lottery!’ I totally agree,” said Becker. “This is an awesome opportunity. It is a positive way to invest in the future of Arnold. Just like decades ago, when folks took the first step to plant those old cottonwoods that line the entryway to the ARA, we are taking a second step to build on what they already did.”

“We are so pleased to be able to award this grant to the Village of Arnold, which will profoundly impact the well-being of residents in Arnold,” said Nebraska Statewide Arboretum Executive Director Hanna Pinneo. “This significant investment will yield important, long-term results. We are proud to partner with the Village of Arnold to support a greener future.”

The goal of the grant program is to improve Nebraska’s community forestry infrastructure by supporting tree removal, care and planting to preserve tree canopy cover, protecting, enhancing and increasing access to watersheds in urban and development areas by focusing on conserving and managing community forests and green storm water infrastructure; and improving workforce development in the tree care industry by providing pathways for high school students, creating job training programs and connecting newly trained professionals with local tree care companies.

Arnold Public Schools Holds Third Community Engagement Meeting

School board members, administrators, and representatives from Wilkins Architecture and Northland Securities hosted a third community engagement meeting, last Thursday, September 4, to discuss and answer questions regarding the potential facility project at Arnold Public Schools.

The latest design, “Option F” (printed in the *Sentinel’s* August 28 issue), was presented, coming in at an estimated \$15.5 million. Currently, there is just over \$3 million in the special building fund. With a \$2.5 million payment coming from the special building fund, that would leave a bond of approximately \$13 million, resulting in a 25.5 cents bond levy paid over 20 years.

Superintendent Joel Morgan said the estimate is for new construction only with the intent of tackling renovations of the elementary along the way. Funding sources for the 1962 building’s renovations would come from subsidized energy loans, state and federal grants and the special building fund. An estimate given to renovate the elementary and shop is \$4 million. Following is the property tax obligation:

\$13 million (20 year bond)				\$15.5 Million Project \$2.5 Million Down 25.5 cents per \$100 of valuation
Property (residential, commercial, ag)	Per Month	Per Year		
\$100,000	\$21.30	\$256		
\$250,000	\$53.24	\$639		
\$500,000	\$106.48	\$1278		
Ag Land Per Year (50% assessed valuation per LB2)				
Irrigated	Per Acre	Per Quarter		
	\$7.94	\$1270		
Dry	\$3.44	\$552		
Grass	\$1.73	\$278		
*Assessed values per acre- LB2 values per acre- Irrigated \$4,472 Dry \$1,941 Grass \$977 Irrigated \$3,105 Dry \$1,347B Grass \$698				

Tobin Buchanan with Northland Securities noted that these values reflect the highest assessed values to be conservative.

A patron at the meeting asked what the all-in cost of the project is, including interest. Buchanan responded saying with the principal amount being \$13 million with an interest rate of 4.5% for 20 years, the total interest paid would be \$6.9 million. He reiterated that they are using a super conservative approach. After the 5-year anniversary, the bond can be refinanced if rates go down and there would not be a prepayment penalty.

Other takeaways from the meeting were: Renovation on the 1925 building is around \$7.2 million. However, the 1962 building would then require immediate renovations. With the latest design, the new construction is connected to the 1962 building by a secure vestibule not requiring instant renovations. The new gym has a capacity of 1,100 and is valued roughly at \$3 million. The gym in the 1962 building accommodates 500-600.

Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) and Ag programs can fit with the new facility. “The board will continue to discuss and then make a decision regarding calling for a bond or the need for additional meetings,” said Mr. Morgan.

School Enrollment Slightly Up

Enrollment for grades K-12 at Arnold Public Schools is up slightly from last year, with a total of 188 students in the classrooms. The total preschool count is 25.

Following is a breakdown of the grades:

PRE-SCHOOL
Teacher: Brittany Payne
Girls 10
Boys 15
Total 25

KINDERGARTEN
Teacher: Emma Stelling
Girls 4
Boys 4
Total 8

FIRST GRADE
Teacher: Erin Wyckoff
Girls 5
Boys 6
Total 11

SECOND GRADE
Teacher: Jessica Vohs
Girls 5
Boys 11
Total 16

THIRD GRADE
Teacher: Jamie Neth
Girls 12
Boys 8
Total 20

FOURTH GRADE
Teacher: Sadie Rotherham
Girls 5

Boys 8
Total 13

FIFTH GRADE
Teacher: Kevin Neth
Girls 8
Boys 9
Total 17

SIXTH GRADE
Girls 5
Boys 5
Total 10

SEVENTH GRADE
Girls 9
Boys 7
Total 16

EIGHTH GRADE
Girls 8
Boys 7
Total 15

FRESHMEN
Girls 7
Boys 10
Total 17

SOPHOMORES
Girls 7
Boys 9
Total 16

JUNIORS
Girls 11
Boys 5
Total 16

SENIORS
Girls 5
Boys 8
Total 13

GRADES K-12
Total girls 91
Total boys 97

Pelster Family Brings New Business to Town

By Janet Larreau

Ned Pelster and his family made a big move back to his hometown in the middle of the summer, 2025, and are now settled in with the kids in school and his business, NP Crop Solutions, now based in Arnold.

Pelster graduated from Arnold High School in 2006 and went on to obtain his Bachelor of Science in Agribusiness degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. His current business, NP Crop Solutions, provides wholesale crop protection chemistry; mainly focusing on herbicide, insecticide, and fungicides. Pelster said he strives to bring quality products backed by sound agronomic advice to his customers at competitive prices.

He operated a similar business in Wolbach, Nebraska, for the past 13 years, and during that time, was fortunate to work with several Arnold area growers for a number of those. After some restructuring over the last couple of years, he and his family decided to relocate their base of operations back to Custer County. Their moving journey started last fall, with some guidance from



Ned Pelster with wife Jenny, and kids (l-r) Lainey, Conner and Macey, are making Arnold their home after moving their business, NP Crop Solutions, to Custer County. - Debbie Connelly photo

AEDC Director Cheryl Carson and support from the Arnold Village Board. “One of our initial hurdles was to find a property that would quickly address our residential and business needs,” said Pelster. “Thankfully, I was

able to work with Travis Brohman to purchase his family’s property on North Carroll Street. It has proven to be a good fit for our family and business needs. We are excited to be back in the area and part of the community. It

is nice to see many familiar faces and meet some new ones. We look forward to the many opportunities that Arnold has to offer and being close to family.”

Powerful New Drama ‘Not Too Far Distant’ Brings Veteran History to Life

(Arnold, NE – September 2, 2025) Veterans’ history will no longer be a distant memory to the Arnold community; the youngest to the oldest will be treated to a vivid recollection and a deep appreciation of our dedicated local heroes during a two-day event.

“Not Too Far Distant” performs on Monday, November 10th, at 6:00 p.m. at Arnold Public Schools and will be presented by William A Layton American Legion Post 130 and Auxiliary, Dean K. Leach Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 6157, Arnold Area Historical Society, Arnold Public Schools, and Arnold Community Foundation.

“It is an honor for Arnold to host this special Veterans Day program. The event is a joint effort of many local organizations and groups. What a great way to share our veterans’ sacrifice and contributions with the community, our students, and fellow veterans,” said Holly Tullis, one of many assisting with organizing the event.

In addition to a full performance of the play, the Blixt Foundation staff and local veterans will

be hosting an open house prior to and following the Monday night performance. Local historical military memorabilia will also be on display during the two-day event. The visiting artists will also have the chance to meet with students throughout the school day to build a better understanding between youth and local veterans.

The new work by Lincoln playwright and speaker for the Veterans Day program on November 11th, Becky Boesen, looks forward to sharing her passion and appreciation locally. “It’s almost unbelievable that anyone could be hardened to the point of doing the brutal things they did,” said Boesen, speaking of the atrocities committed in the holocaust. A young man from Nebraska is sent to war, carrying with him the hopes of the free world. What Staff Sergeant Clarence Williams encounters are challenges that change his humanity forever. History touches the present when a new generation takes a journey through time to

See **POWERFUL DRAMA**, page 5.