

The Arnold Sentinel

“Serving the South Loup River Valley”

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Arnold Community Foundation Fund board member Melanie Chesley (left) presents local Operation Christmas Child organizer Melody Jennings (with husband Irv) the 2025 Philanthropist Organization of the Year award at the ACFF's Annual Banquet & Auction held on November 22 at the community center. - Debbie Connelly photos



ACFF board member Renee Bubak (left) presents Berni Crow and Dave Crow the 2025 Individual Philanthropists of the Year award.



Arnold Rotarian Nicole Badgley presented the recently published book *A Journey Through Time - Arnold, Nebraska Historical Markers* to an emotional Berni Crow at the ACFF Banquet & Auction. A project of Arnold Rotary, the book protects all of Berni's historical marker information and photos that she researched for many years.

Over \$74,000 Raised At ACFF's Banquet & Auction

ARNOLD, NE - Two hundred twenty people were in attendance for an evening of dining, bidding, good conversation, and celebrating Arnold and its successes during the 2025 Arnold Community Foundation Fund's banquet and auction. The Arnold Community Center is the annual site for the ACFF's gala highlighting the support of community projects through fund raising and honoring both individuals and organizations who have worked for the betterment of Arnold and its citizens. The event netted \$74,861 for the Arnold community. To borrow a phrase from this summer's successful fundraising, the Arnold Community Foundation Fund continues to "Be a Game Changer" for Arnold and its residents.

ACFF's newest board member Josh Magill welcomed the crowd as patrons moved through the silent auction offerings, enjoying refreshments provided by Herbie's Speakeasy of Stapleton. The dinner featuring Surf and Turf, prepared and served by Around the Block Catering of Gothenburg, was underway soon after. Magill called for the

first presentation of the evening, a check from the ACFF to the Arnold Cemetery Board in the amount of \$14,171.80. The cemetery has planned several upgrades this year, aligning its roads with an official survey and replacing the old north-south roadbed on its east side with asphalt millings. The additional funds from the ACFF will allow the cemetery to install new fencing on the north and complete the south fence.

This year four local entities participated and benefited from a collective fundraising event that incentivized more local giving through matching funds. A total of \$108,000 was generated over a summer of giving from combining ACFF's matching grants and funds raised during Give 4 Custer County, hosted by the Custer County Foundation. The four entities raised nearly \$65,000 while ACFF awarded over \$37,000 in matching funds, and CCF awarded over \$6,500.

The four entities are the Finch Memorial Library, raising/awarded \$7,049.29; Arnold Cemetery Board, \$10,271.01; Arnold Area Historical

Society, \$22,362.84; and Arnold Rotary's Riverview Garage Project, \$68,932.08. The Finch Memorial Library plans to use the money to upgrade the lighting, flooring, and walls in its basement. The Arnold Cemetery continues to improve its road alignment and replacement of roadbed with asphalt millings. With its recent donation from the ACFF, the board will replace fencing on the north and complete south side fencing. The Cornerstone Museum will use funds to purchase doors and windows, and the Riverview Garage Project continues to progress on a workable plan for multi-bay garages for its residents.

The Arnold Community Foundation Fund continues to impact Arnold in positive and visible ways. The Carroll Street Courts will see improvements with the pouring of new cement scheduled for the summer of 2026. The ACFF gave \$12,000 to support this project. The new Veterans Memorial sits completed at the junction of Hwy 92 and Hwy 40, with flags flying in the stiff wintery wind. Besides funds of \$10,000, the ACFF co-sponsored "Not

Too Far Distant," a drama presented at the Arnold School on November 10 along with co-sponsors William A Layton American Legion Post 130 and Auxiliary, Dean K. Leach Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 6157, Arnold Public Schools, and Arnold Area Historical Society. The event was well attended and praised by veterans, community members, and school children and featured a local display of veteran clothing, photos and other memorabilia. A community vision session was held for community members and school students in April, and it helped identify key areas for community revitalization. Finally, ACFF employed three dynamic hometown interns in 2025 and benefited from their youthful perspective and energy. ACFF is now accepting intern applications for 2026.

Thank you to the Arnold community for your work and support that allow the Arnold Community Foundation Fund to grow, thrive, and envision an even better Arnold for the future!

Philanthropists Receive Awards

Each year the Arnold Community Foundation pays tribute to an individual and group or organization that has given of its time and talents to improve Arnold or otherwise contribute to a philanthropic cause. The awards were presented at the ACFF's Annual Banquet & Auction held on November 22.

The 2025 Philanthropist of the Year for an Organization, Entity, or Business went to Operation Christmas Child and its community spark plug Melody Jennings. Melanie Chesley presented the award to Melody and Irv, and their

family and a multitude of volunteers joined the Jennings on stage for congratulations and a photo.

Operation Christmas Child began in 1993 when Samaritan's Purse sent 28,000 shoeboxes full of gifts for children in the wartorn Balkans of Eastern Europe. Sometime in the early 2000s, Jennings, whose helpmate has been her spouse Pastor Irv, began gathering and organizing boxes for Arnold's first Operation Christmas Child. Jennings involved not only their own con-

See Philanthropists Awards, page 8

Learning From Dr. Merle

Three senior friends choose to intern at Bierman Veterinary Service

When choosing an internship for their senior year at A.H.S., three friends chose to spend their first five periods on Fridays helping local veterinarian Merle Bierman at Bierman Veterinary Service. The boys, Paxton Bierman, Haydn Stretesky, and Crew Witthuhn,

were there, when nine Golden Retriever puppies – all from the same litter – were brought into the clinic for a routine puppy examination.

"The visit worked perfectly for a lesson in puppy care, as well as wrangling nine squirming puppies for our interns,"

said Leron Bierman, who assists husband Merle in managing the business.

The three interns have had a chance to get their feet wet in the veterinary world. From puppies and kittens, to spays and neuters of cats and dogs, routine small animal vaccinations and evaluations, herd work of cows and calves, client interaction, as well as the business side of the clinic.

This is the Biermans' fourth year in the intern program. The first was out of the clinic working cattle. The second year, they were able to change the model and have the interns come in for a whole morning once a week. This allows them to schedule things that the interns might enjoy seeing or be able to help with hands-on, whether in the clinic or out on the site. It also allows Dr. Merle



A.H.S. senior interns (from left) Haydn Stretesky, Crew Witthuhn, and Paxton Bierman happily helped wrangle nine Golden Retriever puppies for a routine puppy check as part of their internship at Bierman Veterinary Service. - Courtesy photo

the chance to teach while performing the procedure so that students can have a realistic look at what being a veterinarian looks like.

"We enjoy the opportunity to invest knowledge

and time helping students decide for or against veterinary care or owning a business of their own," said Leron. "This year is especially great as we get to have our own son, Paxton, and his classmates,

Crew and Haydn, as interns. We'd love to send a hometown student off to veterinary school and have them come back and join the team some day!"

Why They Chose It

"I chose this internship because it's what I'm interested in and used to. We watch surgeries, work cows, see different ways of medicating animals, and many other things. My favorite things about the internship is getting to actually go out and work cows." - Paxton Bierman

"I chose the internship mostly because of the Bierman family are real cool folk. And my favorite part of it is meeting people from all around." - Haydn Stretesky

"I really like working cows and seeing how others work cows. Also, it's nice to learn from Merle and see how he treats different animals." - Crew Witthuhn