

The Arnold Sentinel

"Serving the South Loup River Valley"

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Get To Know Your Hometown Businesses Reed's Food Center

Sixth in a monthly series on what businesses and services the community of Arnold has to offer.

By Pepper Werner

Growth and time promote change. Once upon a time there were three grocery stores in Arnold. By 1963, two remained; one was Watson's Market (next to Nansel's Best Service) where they also processed cattle and hogs, and the other was Jack & Jill, located across the street from the current location on South Walnut. After moving to the west side of the street, Jack Headley sold the store to Delbert Snyder, and that's where the Reed family comes into the picture.

John Reed has had much experience in the grocery business, starting when he was 14 years old with his dad's store in South Dakota. Instead of moving around as a military brat, John and his family relocated based on where his dad was working at or buying grocery stores.

So how does a young couple from South Dakota find a grocery store for sale in central Nebraska? John's parents were living in North Platte and news travels within the business. It was a long-term investment opportunity that the Reeds couldn't pass up. They knew they wanted to raise a family in a small town, and John knew the grocery business, so Arnold it was.

John went through high school thinking he wanted to be a teacher and a coach.

"How could I justify spending

\$2,000.00 per year on college and not even make a decent living when I graduated?" John questioned.

At the time, the market was flooded with teachers, and John had already acquired tremendous grocery experience, so he changed course and went to school in Pipe Stone, Minnesota, and studied Supermarket Management. Yes, there is an actual degree in that field.

The north side of the store location building was the former Western Auto. Not open at the time, Mr. Snyder believed that might be a selling point for the new owners given the chance to expand the store. The package deal purchase allowed for doubling the size of the store, adding coolers, shelving units and products. Gail and John Reed purchased the Jack & Jill grocery store from Delbert Snyder in August 1979. After a month of renovation, the store opened with the changes on September 9, 1979.

The Reeds have raised three sons in Arnold and run a successful grocery store. Through the years, the store has undergone five or six remodels with the most recent one in 2010 following an energy efficiency model. With advice and guidance from the USDA and the Nebraska Development Corporation, John invested \$200,000.00 in coolers, changed compressors and the rack system, and it slashed the utility



John (pictured) and wife Gail Reed established Reed's Food Center in 1979 and have made many improvements over the years, including making energy efficient upgrades. The couple plans more improvements in the future. (Pepper Werner photo)

bill by a tremendous amount per year.

"The initial investment was a little steep, but the changes have more than paid for themselves in the efficiency of the coolers and updated equipment. The old coolers had been in place so long that they were frozen to the walls. We had to remove a wall in the building, hook chains to the pickup, and literally pull the coolers out. It was quite the experience and explained why things were eating so much electricity," John said.

There is so much community support in Arnold. When John ordered his new freezers, the

store wasn't quite ready and the Village offered to store them in one of their buildings. It was a group effort of many people to remove, remodel and reinstall the new equipment.

When John purchased the store, Nash Finch was the wholesaler that supplied the groceries. That supplier was eliminating the smaller stores that didn't reach a certain purchase amount, and the new agreement was with Affiliated Foods. Six months ago, a new arrangement was made when AWG (Associated Wholesale Grocers) merged with Affiliated Foods. They provide Best Choice, Always Save and the na-

tional brands. There was a purchase option given to the store owners to buy 15 shares to be a member of the coop and receive better product pricing. Those saving in turn, are passed to the customers. The share purchase wasn't a requirement, but John felt that it was a benefit to the people that have long supported the food center. The merger has also provided a larger variety of products to the consumer. Some items are seasonal, and tracking those products allows for more efficient purchases and providing the goods that customers are needing.

John and Gail remember the days when they had a label gun and used hand labor to price each product. It took seven to eight hours per week to do inventory and prepare for the orders. The change to a scanning system was much more time efficient and allowed that inventory only be done every quarter. In 1995, a \$15,000.00 investment on used scanning and tracking equipment was a step in the right direction. But in 2000, another \$30,000.00 upgraded the equipment to where they are today. Now inventory is done yearly and a monthly report can be produced with the click of a button.

Twice weekly deliveries provide the products to the store and special requests are welcome. If there are special events, holidays or seasonal items, just make a request to the store and they will order your items. The store will also deliver to those in need. Two days per week the food center makes drop offs to Riverview and to customers in the area.

Another service the store offers is the meat department and butcher. Many years ago, the meat department started with carcass meats and made special cuts. It was a lot of hand labor and required many hours to make the products available for purchase. Now the meat is purchased in what is called "boxed beef" and in much

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Organizations Benefit From Bike Rally



Devil's Den Bike Rally members and mentors from the TeamMates organization came together when the bike rally donated money to the chapter. Pictured are: (front, from left) Merri Jo Halstead, Margie McDowell, Ken Wehrman, Leta Connell, Julie Barton, Tammy Weinman, Rose Bierman, Barb Gunther; (middle) Berni Crow, Irv Jennings, Tim Turley, Mike Nelson, Dylan Nelson; (back, l-r) Paige Schweitzer, Al Bishop, Heather Hagler, Merle Bierman and Roy Bierman. (Courtesy photo)

Many sponsors made it possible for the Devil's Den Motorcycle Rally to make generous donations to local organizations in the area following the 2017 event. As the sixth year, it was the best year ever with 181 registrants in the Poker Run. The two local groups that were chosen this year were "Autism Awareness" and "TeamMates." "Out of the Darkness" has been the steadfast charity for the six years of the rally.

Arnold Public Schools have several students identified with autism. While working with the teachers of those students, a list of needs was accumulated. The items are then purchased by the organization and donated to the school. Fortunately, the

items are useful for many other students as well.

In TeamMates, there are many students paired with adult mentors. Each year the donation that the organization provides goes into a scholarship fund. The mission of TeamMates is to positively impact the world by inspiring youth to reach their full potential.

Out of the Darkness, the third supported charity, is a support group for families who have been impacted by suicide. It is estimated that as suicide attempt is made every minute. The group also increases public awareness of how to help prevent this terrible tragedy from happening. A local fund was set

up to help families in need.

After all bills were paid and profits recorded, there was an astonishing \$2,000.00 worth of items purchased for APS students and Autism Awareness: two Mini iPads, two pairs of Apple earbuds, two large ball chairs for older students, eight small ball chairs for younger students, three Sets of Guided Reading Strips, Reading Guide Highlighter Strips, Write Again Re-markable Clipboards and sleeves, pencil baskets, noise reduction headphones, reading focus cards, Primary Concepts Sight Word Speller Workbooks, and a magnetic building block set. The organization is also looking into buying a Buddy Bench for the playground and a

program called the Read Naturally Program.

There was \$2,000.00 donated to TeamMates. The South Loup Bobcat Cheerleaders received \$700.00, and Arnold Golf Association received \$750.00. Last Call Ministries and Christian Motorcycle Association each received \$500.00 for the work they do helping with the bike rally event. This is a total of \$6,450.00 in local donations. The Out of the Darkness funds were directed to the son of one of the biggest supporters and friend of the organization, Dan Zoerb.

"Without the generous contributions of the sponsors, it would not be possible to extend these funds to help friends and

neighbors. Thank you so much for donating to these valuable causes," said Rally President Mike Nelson.

Plans are already underway for the 7th Annual 2018 rally.

Learn and Grow in 4-H

Western Riders Will Re-Organize On February 11

By Kacee Dvorak

The Western Riders 4-H Club would like to welcome anybody interested in 4-H to come to our meeting Sunday, February 11. This meeting will be held at the Methodist Church in Arnold and will start at 6:30 p.m. The main points of this meeting will be: the election of new officers and discussing 2018 enrollment and project interests.

We highly encourage anybody interested in joining to come to this meeting! 4-H can benefit kids in many different ways. It teaches them new skills and helps them build on existing ones. They might even find it fun to do something that they don't usually do. But, you must be enrolled by April 1 for that project in order for it to be counted. You also must be 8 years of age by January 1, 2018, in order to participate in the 4-H curriculum.

Contact organizational leader Holly Remund of the Western Riders 4-H Club in Arnold at (605) 350-0064 if you are interested in 4-H but unable to attend the meeting. Visit <https://extension.unl.edu/statewide/custer/4h-online-registration/> for more information about 4-H in Custer County or to enroll online. The deadline to enroll is April 1 and it costs only \$7 per member. There are monthly business meetings and weekly practice times for select projects with a project leader. Custer County Fair is July 27-August 2, 2018.