

The Arnold Sentinel

“Serving the South Loup River Valley”

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Bowers' Gun Shop Business Is Growing

By Pepper Werner

Jeff and Debbie Bowers and their family moved to Arnold in 1996 from South Texas. At that time, Jeff went to work for Ray Pearman at A-1 Auto Body as a mechanic and they have never looked back.

Jeff said, "I knew Arnold would be a great place for a little shop and to retire."

In March 2012, the Bowers obtained their license and opened the doors to Sandhills Classic Arms, Inc. After six months of looking at options, they decided to convert the existing garage next to their house into his shop. It was mostly a security choice for the firearms and ease of access.

AEDC came through with a loan in 2013, as well as a grant from the village. That afforded Jeff the opportunity to add electrical, sheet rock and insulation to the shop. It was quite a boost to attract more customers and add more stock. In 2015, a second AEDC loan allowed Jeff to purchase a milling machine and additional equipment for fabrication of parts. He has big plans for the future as well.

Bowers has had a lifelong love of the outdoors. His father was an avid outdoorsman and shared that with his five sons. However, Jeff was the one who wanted to be a hunter and fisherman and he pursued it with a passion. Many of Jeff's dad's friends taught him a lot. He grew up on the Coastal Bend of South Texas fishing and learned to clean a shotgun at 10 years old by reading a book. He would beg his brothers to let him take their guns apart and clean them also.

At 15 years old, Jeff took a job at a small gun shop in Texas. After two years of sweeping and cleaning, they decided that he might be serious and would stick around. He started learning the basics of gunsmithing and firearms maintenance. Jeff has taken gunsmithing courses in Texas and Arizona, a two-year mail order class that he describes as the hardest experience ever, as well as becoming nationally certified in



Jeff Bowers (pictured), with wife Debbie, opened their gun shop in Arnold in 2012, and the business is growing. (Pepper Werner photo)

Focus On Your Hometown Businesses Sandhills Classic Arms

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

gunsmithing from Washington, D.C. In 1996, Bowers stated that if anyone was interested in pursuing gunsmithing, he would recommend two schools: Colorado School of Trades and Trinity. They have excellent programs and teach a wide variety of skills.

There have been many different career paths throughout the years that have supported

Jeff's love of hunting. A few are construction, mechanics and even law enforcement. The latter afforded Jeff the opportunity to participate in armor schools that had a broad training on firearms. The inventory at his current business reflects this exposure. Sandhills Classic Arms offers full gunsmithing services: cleaning, building and manufacturing full firearms,

repairs of most firearms, as well as wood stock repairs. He carries a small amount of ammunition, but Jeff has sources to order any firearm or load a customer might want.

Future plans include adding a machine or two. Bowers would like to obtain a barrel lathe, manual barrel threading machine and additional cutters for his existing milling machine.

There is always a need for more firearms inventory and he would like to add a line of optics - rifle scopes and binoculars.

The gun shop is listed with the NRA to take deliveries for non-profits such as 4-H, Boy Scouts and FFA. They are able to transfer firearms on behalf of the organization and have done so for Western Riders 4-H and the Arnold Community Foundation. Every November, Bowers helps facilitate the transfer of firearms and displays them at the foundation auction. He feels this is a service to the community to help raise money for the organization.

Sandhills Classic Arms, Inc. supports the community in a variety of ways. One is their Wall of Fame that hangs in the shop that boasts on any outdoor activity. They accept photos of rock climbing, drag racing, hunting, fishing, even archery and running. Anyone can submit a photo and short description of the activity and the winner is chosen by Jeff and Debbie based on the best outdoor activity (not just hunting or fishing). They celebrate the Wall of Fame winner each year at the chili cook-off when they celebrate their business anniversary. Make sure to get submissions on their board.

Another service is the deer/antelope check-in station. SCA took over this obligation last year. There were 301 deer on record in 2016 and that is a free service to the hunter. When the former organizer moved, Jeff felt the need to continue with the check-in. He didn't want Arnold to lose this service. It draws hunters from as far as 100 miles. When the hunters obtain their license, they are provided a list of check-in stations. Signs are hung on the highway that point the way to the gun shop. It brings hunters to the community for nine days in November for rifle hunting and the possibility of two weeks in October for antelope season. This year

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Half of ACFF Auction Proceeds Will Be Earmarked for Arnold Cemetery Restoration Project

The Arnold Community Foundation Fund committee announced last Friday that half of the money raised at this Saturday's (Nov. 18) ACFF fundraiser auction will be earmarked for the Arnold Cemetery restoration project. Each year, the event raises around \$50,000.00. Board president Shane Cool said it is the ACFF board's hope that Arnold residents—and those who no longer live here but have loved ones buried

there—will show their support of the project.

"The trees at the cemetery were old and ugly, but when the wind took them down, it exposed a lot of problems. The fence is in bad shape and stones are leaning after trees fell on them. (The cemetery) needs help. It should be a source of community pride," said Cool.

Both the ACFF and the Arnold Township will be seeking input

from people who are interested in the cemetery. The foundation committee will be working with the township board for ideas on how the money could be spent. ACFF board members are: Cool, Dean Weinman, Holly Hornung Remund, Carolyn Bowers, Gary Blevins, Austin Snyder, Becky Dailey and Joel Morgan.

Cool said some ideas discussed include finishing taking down old trees, planting hard-

wood trees, installing a white fence around the cemetery, straightening stones, and moving the memorial monument east—out of its current congested area—and covering it for the Memorial Day speaker.

If you are unable to attend Saturday night's auction, but would like to donate to the ACFF, designating your donation to the project, please contact Cool at 308-529-2650, Becky Dailey at 848-2522, or

any ACFF board member. Donations for the project can also be mailed to the Arnold Community Foundation Fund, P.O. Box 66, Arnold, NE 69120. Please make checks payable to Arnold Community Foundation Fund and specify in the memo "cemetery restoration project". All donations are tax deductible.

Seating is limited for the ACFF auction meal. For more details on the auction and supper and how to purchase a ticket, please see the advertisement on page 4.

Cattle Theft Near Dawson/Custer County Line

The Dawson County Sheriff's Office is investigating the theft of 20 black bull calves. The theft occurred northwest of Lexington sometime between mid-August and October 19. The calves had red ear tags with the letter "e" followed by three or four digits. The value of loss is estimated at \$20,000. Anyone with information is asked to contact Investigator Randy Adams at the Dawson County Sheriff's Office (308-324-3011).

Anyone with information regarding this or other crimes can also call Dawson Gosper Crime Stoppers at (308) 784-1234 or 1 (866) 652-7383 or you can go online at DawsonGosperCrimeStoppers.com and submit a tip. You may also text your tip by starting your message with "tip707" and send it to "crimes" (274637). Crime Stoppers is completely anonymous and you may receive a cash reward of up to \$1000 for your information.

Vets Program Draws Good Crowd to the School



Legion commander John Phillips introduces Veterans Day speaker Michael Reimers last Wednesday at the school. (Pepper Werner photo)

On Wednesday, November 8, the Veterans Day Program was held at Arnold Public Schools.

Guest speaker was Michael Reimers, 26-year veteran of the military and past deputy com-

mander in Nebraska.

"Today we are here to celebrate, to honor, and to commemorate the dead and the living—the young men and women who in every war since

the country began have given testimony to their loyalty to their country and their own great courage," Reimer began.

"Time and time again, people have served our nation in ex-