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Sixth grade girls (from right) Jayden Hanna-Miles, Alexis Savey and Faith Bierman, with Mrs. Brown, plant starter seeds for the new Tower Garden that will grow fruits and vegetables for the school cafeteria. Once the seeds become root bound, they are planted in the tower garden itself. Starter seeds were planted for beefsteak tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, leafy greens, basil, cucumbers, eggplant, peas and beans. (Courtesy photos)



Science teacher Gerry Swingle holds a piece of the Tower Garden, while students Aaron Edwards (center) and Blake Brown assemble a Tower Garden. Three towers will be growing fresh produce in the school.

From Tower to the Table ACFF Grant Enables School to Grow Its Own Produce

Students at Arnold Public Schools will soon be growing their own fruits and vegetables to eat - the result of a \$3,500.00 grant awarded to the school by the Arnold Community Foundation Fund.

The grant was used to purchase three, five-foot aeroponic Family Tower Gardens, which arrived at the school just last week. Each tower will grow 30 some plants in an air or mist environment. The growing chamber contains no soil or aggregate medium. Instead, the chamber is empty. It's just roots and air between each irrigation cycle. The tumbling water during these irrigation cycles creates a fine mist, oxygenating the water and bathing the roots of each plant on its way down to the reservoir. This process is continuously repeated with each irrigation cycle, providing maximum amounts of fresh oxygen, water and nutrients to the roots of the plants 24 hours a day.

The design of the system produces extraordinary crops that grow much faster than they

would in soil, producing bountiful harvests within weeks of being transplanted into the system.

Another key benefit is the massive growing chamber for the roots. Because the plants' roots do not run out of space, they continue to grow strong and healthy.

Arnold teacher Liz Brown, who wrote the grant, said the towers are on dollies, so they can be moved around from class to class. One tower will be located upstairs for Grades 7-12, and two will be in the elementary school.

The fruits and vegetables will be grown throughout the school year at APS.

"They will be used as an educational and sustainable tool for Arnold students for years to come," she said. "Our long-term goals are to have a greenhouse, so our school can produce enough fruits and vegetables to be served during our school lunches and be sold to the community, creating another small business."

During the beginning stages,

all students and staff members will be a part of the Tower Garden process. As the project continues to grow, the knowledge and sustainability can be passed to other schools within Custer County.

Brown said the towers will address several subject areas, including math (measuring and ratios), science (seeds, plants and nutrients), health (nutrition education), and social studies (community connections and farming techniques). Students in Grades K-12 will be responsible for the entire process, start to finish, putting the Tower Gardens together, planting seeds, pruning produce as needed, checking the pH levels, deciding what to do with the produce, and anything else needed to ensure the plant life cycle is being tended to properly.

"Students in our building have limited experiences with plants, and the Tower Gardens will provide authentic learning opportunities for all students and staff," said Brown. "They also need to be eating more

fruits and vegetables. These two needs will be met."

Brown, Gerry Swingle, Berni Crow, Debby Moninger and Shar Peterson will record observations to see how much produce is being harvested throughout the school year, and they plan to use a combination of surveys and questionnaires and pre/post assessments to show growth in the school's learning objectives, which will be in line with State Standards.

The ACFF grant allowed for the purchase of the towers and materials needed for one year.

The Arnold Community Foundation Fund is an affiliated fund of the Nebraska Community Foundation (NCF), a 501(c)(3) corporation which provides nonprofit status, financial management, strategic development and education/training services to communities, organizations and donor-advised funds across the state. NCF is confirmed in compliance with the highest National Standards for U.S. community Foundations.

Working with NCF helps the

Arnold Community Foundation Fund reduce administrative costs and provides access to a wide range of services. This means more of every dollar received in donations benefits the Arnold area.



"Highway Paleontology" to Air Feb. 25

Segment Filmed Near Arnold

A reminder to readers that the NET Television story "Highway Paleontology" will air February 25 at 7:00 p.m. The story of how NET TV filmed the episode near Arnold was featured in the February 11 issue of *The Sentinel*. The segment documents University of Nebraska State Museum Highway Paleontologist Shane Tucker and his team as they uncovered fossils of an ice-age bison.

Anyone can see the episode by visiting the "Nebraska Stories" website at netNebraska.org/nebraskastories, Facebook or by downloading the NET Nebraska App.

Incumbents File for School/Hospital District Boards

Incumbents Duane Bowers, Eric Nelson and Diana Coleman, whose terms expire this year, have filed to seek re-election to the Arnold School Board.

The seats of John Phillips and Charles Blowers, Jr. are up on the Arnold Hospital District Board. Phillips has filed for re-election.

The deadline for incumbents to file for the May Primary Election was February 16. Non-incumbents have until March 1 to file for either of these boards with the Custer County Clerk's office.

The filing deadline for offices on the General Election ballot is July 15 for incumbents and August 1 for non-incumbents. This would include the Arnold Village Board, where two seats will be up.

AVFD Adds New Pumper Truck to Fleet



A new diesel pumper truck was put in use by the Arnold Vol. Fire Department last week, replacing the old gas model. (Janet Larreau photo)

A new pumper truck was put in use just last week by the Arnold Vol. Fire Department. The 1997 Pierce pumper is being leased by the AVFD through the Nebraska State Forest Service at the very low cost of \$4,400.00.

"It's government surplus, and

came off a naval base on the east coast," said Fire Chief Eric Nelson. "We put our name on a list for a piece of equipment similar to what we got and just waited."

The truck will replace the department's 1982 Smeal gas pumper, which was sold on Big

Iron Auction for \$3,100.00.

"There was nothing wrong with (the Smeal)," said Nelson. "But the Pierce is a diesel and is more reliable and more capable of fire suppression. The old pumper pumped 750 gallons a minute, and the new one pumps 1,250 gallons per

minute."

Nelson said it would cost around \$500,000.00 for a similar new pumper truck.

"(The used) truck will suit the city of Arnold great for a long time. For the cost, you couldn't beat it," he said.