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Congressman Adrian Smith (left), APS Art instructor Julie Mohr, and Leighton Bubak, holding his Congressional Art Competition award for the photograph pictured to the right. Mrs. Mohr encouraged Leighton to enter the competition. (APS photo)

Congressman Smith Presents Art Award to Arnold Freshman

Congressman Adrian Smith presented a Congressional Art Competition award to freshman Leighton Bubak at a special assembly held in the school's auditorium last Friday morning.

Superintendent Dr. Dawn Lewis introduced the congressman to the student body, praising him for the work he does in Congress to represent the state of Nebraska.

"It's great to be back in Nebraska, for many reasons. I am proud of Nebraska," said Smith.

He said every day, thousands of people see pieces of art displayed from every district in the country in Washington, D.C.

"It's an example of how art

can add to our culture," he said. "With all the stresses in our country, it's a reminder of what we have in our country and in our people."

Smith said one of the parts of his job is to stop to visit communities in Nebraska.

"It is so clear that communities are supporting our kids. A lot of great things are happening. There are a lot of things that are right about our country, and Leighton is an example of this, and so are all of you," he told the students.

Smith encouraged the students to consider applying for the Youth Advisory Council and college internships with his office. He said there are also tremendous opportunities to serve the country in the service

academies.

"My #1 job is to make sure you have opportunities. Sometimes the government wants to set those opportunities for you. For too long we have had a divided country, and I hope this presidential election can bring us together," he said. "Together, we can, as a famous Nebraskan says, 'Get 'er done.'"

Smith said as a fourth place winner in the Congressional Art Contest, Leighton's photograph, titled "Webbed Ladder" will hang in the congressman's Grand Island office to be appreciated there.

"We expect more submissions from you in the future," Smith told Leighton.

Mills Hardware Expands Greenhouse Business



Diane Edwards looks over the colorful selection of lilies in the new greenhouse at Mills Hardware. (Janet Larreau photo)

Greenhouse plants at Mills Hardware have a lot more room to breathe this spring, as the business has expanded.

Owners Terry and Dena Mills, who have set up the popular greenhouse for several years now, unveiled a second greenhouse on the west side of their building on Highway 92.

"We are very fortunate to get a lot of business from surrounding communities, and we were running out of space. The plants were outside, inside and everywhere. For the health of the plants, we needed more space for them to breathe. We also wanted more variety for a good shopping experience," said Andrew Tickle.

The Mills purchased the second 21' x 30' greenhouse from a hardware friend, and with help from their employees and Clay Mohr, poured a 56' x 41' cement pad to place it on.

"It seems a little overkill for a greenhouse, but it allows for more space for product around it, and the forethought is that if we ever want to use the pad for anything else, it will be sturdy and big enough to handle it," said Tickle.

The business also added 6' on to the existing greenhouse, so both are now 30' long.

The concrete pad will make it easier for ladies to browse

through the greenhouses and for employee Melody Jennings to work her magic.

"Melody is really the heartbeat of things. She takes care of the plants like they're her own. Because of her, it has allowed us to grow because our plants are well taken care of compared to a big box store," said Tickle.

The next truck load of plants is scheduled for this week, and with that load, the business will double the amount of flowers and vegetables they have had in the past, adding several varieties never seen before. Next year, they are hoping to expand into carrying shrubs.

AHS Graduation is Saturday

The Class of 2016 will receive their diplomas at the 103rd Annual A.H.S. Commencement set for this Saturday, May 14, starting at 2:00 p.m., in the school auditorium.

Local businesses are congratulating the seniors in this issue.

Retirement Reception

Arnold Public Schools will be hosting a retirement reception for Penny Allen on Tuesday, May 17, from 11:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m., in the gymnasium. The event is open to the public.

Pelster Opens Financial Services Office in Arnold

New business owner says Arnold was a good choice

After a month of remodeling the former Arnold Insurance Agency building, Thrivent Financial Representative Echo Pelster FIC, RICP, CLTC opened her door to the public last Friday.

Pelster, a resident of Gandy since 2014 with husband LaVern, mother of three grown kids and grandmother of 10, set out to purchase the historic Finch Drugstore building on West Arnold Avenue from Joe Bob Atkins after searching for the best location in the area.

Adam and Melani Wonch, owners of Cloudfire Services, referred Pelster to Cheryl Carson at the Arnold Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) office.

"Cheryl has a tremendous knowledge of available grants and plans, business interest and potential industry for the area. She is very efficient in the planning and strategies of her position. In addition, Cheryl's husband, Sean, had told me about the desire to grow Arnold," said Pelster.

In the demographic studies she looked at, Pelster said Arnold was the best situated for the services available. She found that over 4,000 people come to or through Arnold each day.

"Arnold is a thriving community with lots of local events,



Thrivent Financial Services Representative Echo Pelster in the her newly remodeled office building in Arnold. (Kendra Veirs photo)

and a great sense of business comradery. Businesses are interested in Arnold's success as a town, and residents support the town and take interest in what's going on," she said.

After purchasing the drugstore building, Pelster applied for a small LB840 business loan and accompanying grant in support of Arnold. She said the attached grant will help her fund more educational events for the public in Arnold and around the area.

With CPA Missy Kramer already interested in sharing office space, Pelster's project goal was to convert the building into two suites that would have the ability to support a total of nine

employees between two businesses comfortably, and more employees who flex and share spaces.

Remodeling took 30 complete days, and often involved 10 craftsmen working every day. Pelster used small business trades from Arnold and four surrounding communities to find the skills and talents needed. In the end, she was very happy with the excellent work that everyone did.

Historical features of the building, such as the original tin ceilings and gas lights, were kept; however, revealing them was not a cost efficient task considering the 14-foot high ceilings and the cost of heating.

"There were some disappointments and 'extra costs' with the building; however, I really made the purchase for the location," she said. "As a 132-year-old landmark with lots of history, it really deserved preservation. We now have a beautiful facility."

Pelster's long-term business plan calls for several people working from her location. Some will work in the field and some of those will be office support staff. Each person will go through an assessment, fingerprinting and a background check if they are offered a position with Thrivent. Currently, there are two positions to fill in this area, and all prospective employees require training and licensing depending on the position they are applying for.

The Arnold office will be a full financial services office, including a brokerage platform, helping people live with their means, and be wise with their money, build emergency funds, minimize credit card debt, pay down and be wise with debt, and protect themselves from setbacks such as loss of income. Pelster said the services Thrivent offers also help people provide for their loved ones when they die, preserve their independence through the aging process, with extended care planning and long term care needs, including asset protection due to those needs. There are also long and short term goals such as investing for retirement, saving for college, transition to drawing income for retirement, use tax advantaged financial strategies, devel-

oping an exit strategy for leaving their business, farm or ranch, and management of their investment portfolio. Thrivent also helps its clients 'give back,' through supporting their favorite cause, now or after they are gone.

"As AAL and Lutheran Brotherhood were our original parent companies for more than 100 years, there are hundreds of clients in the area," she said. "The integrity of the company itself sold me on Thrivent. As an agent, I am always allowed to do what's best for my clients."

She said as a Christian membership organization that is not for profit, Thrivent pays out 98 percent of its profits each year to help the communities where Thrivent members live. Thrivent Action Teams make a difference in the lives of organizations, clients, cancer and other illness victims and community projects. Thrivent Financial was brought to a new level 3 1/2 years ago, when members voted to receive all Christian denominations. Thrivent is ranked #333 on the Fortune 500 list.

Pelster's office hours will be Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., to accommodate trading hours, with Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings available by appointment only. The phone number is 308-848-2244. Pelster said she will continue to work in the field with clients in addition to having a place for her clients to come.