

The Arnold Sentinel

“Serving the South Loup River Valley”

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The people, the beauty, the event...



Photo/Debbie Connelly

Lirel Holt (right) and his navigator, Samer Damer, pictured enjoying Friday afternoon's car show in Arnold, are behind the company that tracks and ranks 125,000 automotive events.

CEO of MotionU says SORC has it all.

By Janet Larreau
Sentinel Staff

Ranked at #66, the Sandhills Open Road Challenge once again made the list of the Top 100 Automotive Events on the Planet by MotionU. Driving a road hugging Subaru WRX STI, the man behind the company that tracked 125,000 automotive events in 2018 was in town last weekend to compete in the SORC.

“(The Subaru) is quick and fun and handles great, and doesn't try to kill me like the Viper does,” said Lirel Holt, CEO of U, Inc. and Motion U, two Overland Park, Kansas-based Internet companies.

Each year, MotionU selects a list of events, including well-known and not so well known events - like the SORC - that fit special criteria.

“SORC meets many of the Top 100 criteria. One is especially unique, and that is location. The SORC has scenic beauty, unique geography and difficulty of access due to the fact that so many drivers come a long distance to participate,”

said Lirel.

Three staff members of the company, with different bias and background, do the final selection of the Top 100.

“We ask different people each year what their top picks are. Then we look at the attributes and anniversaries. For example, the 100th Running of the Indianapolis would obviously deserve consideration based on criteria of history and most of the other criteria,” said Lirel. “It's much, much harder to do than some might think just to make a list. But we do a lot of analysis as to what excites people, and lists do. People love thoughtful and well-researched categorization, so we try our best do so.”

Lirel can't exactly remember, but he thinks it was 2002 or 2003 when he first entered the SORC. Since then, he has only missed one. This year, his navigator will be Samer Damer - a car/motorcycle lover. Samer is one of the three who chose the Top 100, and is an expert at events. A degreed engineer, he designs and manages software on a daily basis.

Lirel said there are three key reasons

he keeps returning to the SORC. The #1 reason is the people of the Sandhills.

“They are genuine, hard working and an example of what our country should strive for,” he said. “It's amazing that a small town can stop and invite the world to its door. The true beauty is the people. Honestly, it brings tears to my eyes. Thanks to all who do this event. It's a blessing.”

The second reason is the beauty of the area.

“Most of the U.S. doesn't know, and I think you should keep it that way,” he said.

The third reason is that it is a fantastic event.

“The roads, the closeness to everything, the humility of all involved. I've had a first place in every open road type event in the U.S. over 20 years, except SORC. I want a win, and it's hard to win here,” he said.

MotionU is the world's largest automotive “event” researcher and aggregator. U, Inc. and its subsidiaries provide online training and testing to 2,000 automotive career technical schools. Over 175,000 automotive students are trained online by U, Inc. each year. Lirel and his son, Bryce Holt (President of MotionU) are considered the leading experts on automotive data on vehicle clubs, race facilities and events, and established the MotionU Top 100 List of Automotive Events.

Community Celebrates SORC

Arnold's city park was packed on Saturday evening, as the community joined SORC board members, volunteers, racers and their navigators to celebrate another successful Sandhills Open Road Challenge. The crowd enjoyed a barbecue and heard results of Thursday's Loup 2 Loup race, Friday's One-Mile Shoot-Out and Saturday's main event - the open road challenge from Arnold to Dunning and back again. Senator Matt Williams was in attendance, offering his thoughts on the 18th annual event and what it takes to make it succeed.

“Arnold separates itself from any other community in the state,” he said. “These events don't happen by accident. Our world is full of dreamers and achievers. Arnold is full of achievers. If you want to know the difference between dream-

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Carly Loves Charles

“The victory is always sweeter when you're not expecting it!” That's what Carly Gracey's mom, Katie, said after Carly and her steer Charles won Grand Champion Red Angus Steer and Overall Reserve Champion Market Beef at the Custer County Fair.

“Dan told the kids at the beginning of the summer just to have fun with the project and not to worry about winning anything,” said Katie. “It was quite a surprise to us that a farm raised steer would catch the judge's eye. He made it clear that it wasn't just an ordinary Red Angus steer! Carly did a great job of taming him and getting him all ready for the show. They had a very special connection.”

Carly was among several local youth who participated at fair this year. Please turn to pages 4 and 5 for all their results and courtesy photos of the kids in action.



Photo and story by Diana Coleman

Jailyn Strasburg greets a customer on Friday of last week, as BrewBakers officially opened its doors after months of renovating the building.

BrewBakers Officially Opens

“Opening the doors of BrewBakers felt like taking a nosedive into the deep end,” according to Jodi Carlson. “It was my intent to open a few weeks ahead of SORC; however, circumstances beyond my control set the opening right smack in the middle of SORC. I am so thankful for those who took the plunge with me including my employees, Diana Coleman, Gail Reed, Jailyn Strasburg and junior helper, Piper Strasburg.”

It has taken over 22 months to get to this exciting opening day. It would not have happened without a lot of hand-some, free labor and helpers.

Opening the doors of Arnold's new coffee shop has been highly anticipated as shown by the large number of people - both local and out-of-town - who came in the doors and were amazed at the building's transformation.

BrewBakers serves a full coffee menu featuring freshly ground Dark Canyon

Coffee, roasted in Rapid City, South Dakota, along with smoothies. They also serve Black Hills Bagels along with a variety of other freshly baked goods.

Before opening, owner Jodi invited a barista from North Platte, Nebraska, to train all of the employees to ensure that the coffee drinks would be prepared correctly.

Owners Jodi and husband Keith enjoyed finally being able to invite the public in to share with them the changes they have made and serve them coffee or a smoothie.

“The community has been so encouraging to us in the process and giving us courage to keep moving forward. We still have a few construction details to finish but nothing that will hinder opening. The time has come. We are open.”

BrewBakers will hold its grand opening sometime in the fall.