

The Arnold Sentinel

“Serving the South Loup River Valley”

THURSDAY, APRIL 2, 2020

CUSTER COUNTY, ARNOLD, NEBRASKA 69120

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Notable Quote

“Some old fashioned things like fresh air and sunshine are hard to beat.

- Laura Ingalls Wilder

Alumni Banquet Cancelled

The 2020 A.H.S. Alumni Banquet, scheduled for May 23, has been cancelled due to COVID-19. Since many countries, states and cities have banned large events and mass gatherings of more than 50 people through the end of May, board members met last week and made the very hard decision.

President Ali Rosentrater said they will make an exemplary plan for the 2021 banquet, including recognizing this year's honored classes, as well as next year's.

This year's officers will continue their terms through next year.

The Alumni News will be published and mailed out as usual.

This is the first time that the banquet has been cancelled since World War II.

Early Voting Encouraged for May Primary Election

Custer County Clerk Conn Gracey said last week that everyone is encouraged to vote early in the May Primary election. An early voter application can be found in this issue on page 4. If you are interested in voting early, please fill out the form and mail to the clerk's office. Your ballot will then be mailed.

Easter Egg Hunt Cancelled

We are sorry to report that the annual Chamber-sponsored Easter Egg Hunt scheduled for April 4 has been cancelled to comply with CDC guidelines. However, the "Egg My Yard" fundraiser will still go on as planned for those who signed up by the deadline of March 29.

School Board Holds Emergency Meeting

Re-start date of April 20 will be considered at next board meeting

By Janet Larreau

The Arnold School Board held an emergency meeting on March 25 to respond to the changes in the coronavirus situation and the recommendation by the commissioner of education for all Nebraska schools to allow staff to have flexible schedules and work from home.

Due to the Governor's ten person limit on gatherings, some board members attended the meeting using video conferencing. The public was also invited to participate by accessing the web.

An emergency resolution was approved that will give administrators and board members the authority to re-start school without having a special board meeting in the event that things get better at a faster rate than expected.

Interim Superintendent Mark Sievering said that a lot of districts are looking at a re-opening date of May 1, but the Arnold board wants to give everyone a little more hope than that. Previously, the board was scheduled to meet on April 3 to consider resuming school on April 6. The current plan is that the school will definitely be closed through Friday, April 17, but a re-start date of April

20 will be considered at the April 14 regular board meeting.

“The general sentiment is that we'd like to have the students back for a while and have a semi-normal ending to the year. It's kind of planning for the worst and hope for the best situation,” said Sievering.

In action item 2, board members modified and approved a plan to follow the Commissioner's recommendation of allowing certified staff the option of working from home during the school closure. Mr. Sievering said that teachers have started a lot of on-line enrichment activities with the kids.

“In the last couple of days, we've had a good number of staff still in the building. They can go to their rooms and be scattered about, so it is not a concern of too many people congregated together. Some will do that, and for others, it will be beneficial for them to work from home,” he said.

The school will offer a return to work agreement to hourly classified staff at a rate of 100 percent.

Mr. Sievering explained that if these staff members are not able to work their full hours, the board is offering them full pay with the understanding that they are always on call. If they find another job during this time, they have signed an

agreement to pay that money back to the district.

“We want to protect the classified staff and pay their regular rate even if they aren't here. A para-educator's job is to work with the students, and if they aren't here, there is nothing for them to do. It's beneficial to both the district and the employee,” he said.

Several of the classified staff have been helping clean and delivering food since the school closed.

An administrative employment plan was also approved during the closure to include a flexible schedule while fulfilling regular administrative duties. During this time, administrators have participated in a number of webinars and other things during off-hours, and the board recognizes that some duties might be done from home.

The food service plan was also modified during closure and up to May 20 to provide school meals free of charge for all district children up to the age of 18.

“According to new information, we know that if district-wide, half of the students taking advantage of the food service qualify for free or reduced lunches, we can offer that service to all children in the household. There has to be

an Arnold Public Schools student in the house. If there is a 3rd grader, and they have a 2-year-old sibling, we can offer free meals to both of those children,” said Mr. Sievering.

A number of students are currently participating in the food service program - either picking up the meals or having them delivered. Mr. Sievering expects that number to increase knowing that it is free of charge, but not significantly. The district will be reimbursed, according to the new guidelines.

“The folks at the federal level came up with something pretty quickly. I give them credit for wanting to continue to feed the kids and this is a way we can do that,” he said.

If the school is still in the same situation down the road, discussion is being held on how to honor the graduates. Mr. Morgan is communicating with the students using Schoologgy for the time being.

“This is not a vacation for the teachers. They are missing the kids and wishing they were in the building. That's what teachers do. Hopefully, we get them back and have some closure for the year. If not, we'll move forward to do what we can,” said Mr. Sievering.

BrewBakers Selected as Stop on Nebraska Passport 2020

Foot Traffic In Town Could Be In The Thousands

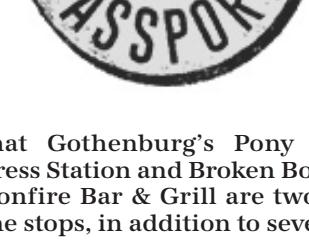
Everyone could use a little bit of good news at the present, and there is some. BrewBakers Coffee House & Gifts is excited to announce that they have been selected as a stop on Nebraska Passport 2020. Through an application process, BrewBakers is only one of 70 stops selected out of the entire state.

Sponsored by Nebraska Tourism, the event starts Memorial Day weekend and continues through October 31. The Passport inspires Nebraskans and tourists to travel throughout the state collecting stamps to earn prizes, while also supporting Nebraska's tourism destinations. In 2019 the foot traffic on selected stops was

1,500 to 4,000 people. The program generated \$23.7 million in traveler spending.

“It is a privilege to host visitors and show them our small town pride, friendliness and give them a reason to return in the future,” said BrewBakers owner Jodi Carlson. “This is good for everyone in town because of the foot traffic...the gas stations, grocery store and other establishments. We have that whole time to show them what Arnold has to offer. There's more to Arnold than meets the eye when you just pass through.”

The 2020 Passport will feature 70 attractions in 10 themed categories. Jodi said she tapped into the gift, coffeehouse and historic side. All three are considered in order to be selected in the category she applied for. She said it is also fun to know



that Gothenburg's Pony Express Station and Broken Bow's Bonfire Bar & Grill are two of the stops, in addition to several in North Platte.

Jodi applied last year and didn't get in. She said expanding her hours since then most likely helped BrewBakers to be accepted in 2020.

“Now that I've been accepted,

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Arnold Fire Department Prepared for Possible COVID-19 Calls

By Tammy Weinman
AVFD Rescue Captain

The Arnold Volunteer Fire Department started preparing for the COVID 19-crisis about two weeks ago.

One ambulance has been set aside to handle all respiratory/possible COVID-19 calls. This will help ensure both ambulances are not contaminated.

The department has the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE), which includes gloves, gowns, surgical masks and N95 masks, and eye protection, to handle patients that may have the virus. The Custer County emergency manager, Mark Rempe, was able to get some surgical masks and N95 masks for all rescue squads in Custer County, through the Loup Basin Public Health Department.

Mark Rempe has been a great resource for the department. He meets with the Loup Basin Public Health Department every Tuesday morning, then meets with community leaders in the afternoon through Webex, an online web meeting app.

Mark has also been meeting with the rescue captains in Custer County every Saturday through Webex. The fire departments in Custer County have a mutual aid agreement with each other. Meeting once a week to touch base with each other and discuss what is available for supplies, resources, and personnel on a weekly basis has been helpful in planning for the crisis.

There has not been any confirmed positive cases of the virus in the Loup Basin Public Health Department. We hope this trend continues but if it doesn't we feel we are as prepared as we can be to take care of our community.

If you have a fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat you should immediately self isolate and contact Loup Basin Public Health Department or your healthcare provider. You can protect yourself from COVID 19 and other respiratory illnesses by practicing strict social distancing, covering your cough/sneeze and frequently washing your hands.

Arnold Residents Are Doing Their Part

Heidi Kulp and her girls are busy at the sewing machine, making masks

sewing.”

They are using their supply of scrap fabrics from other sewing projects and some that were intended for future projects. People have also donated fabric to use if it is the right material. The masks are 100 percent cotton that is double sided with double layers of interfacing. When they ran out of elastic, they improvised and used headbands, which have worked well. Heidi also ran out of interfacing, so one of her co-workers ordered some online. It was hard to find and shipping was significantly delayed.

Heidi is in the process of finding contacts to larger facilities that may have need for them.

Claire said, “We are making them because if we don't have enough of the normal masks, we could have these as a backup.”

“It's been really fun making masks. We can give them to the clinic and to sick people.” Kate added.

“Historically, we did not have disposable medical supplies; everything was re-useable. One benefit of utilizing this type of mask is that they are washable and cuts down on waste,” said Heidi.

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Courtesy photo

Claire (seated on table) and Kaitlyn Kulp display masks they are helping their mom, Heidi, make to help with a shortage in facilities due to COVID-19.