

The Arnold Sentinel

“Serving the South Loup River Valley”

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Eyes on the Road, Hands on the Wheel

Arnold one of few schools around that still offers driver's ed

By Janet Larreau

Arnold's driver's ed instructor Todd Phelps has his hands full this semester teaching 22 students the rules of the road. It's not an easy job, but Mr. Phelps is up for the challenge.

“I joke around with them. I stay calm and just let them drive where it is safe. I had a couple times where I have had to use my brake and a couple times where I have had to take the steering wheel out of their hands. I stay calm so they don't get overly excited and we get back under control and talk about what happened and what should have happened if done correctly,” he said.

The most common mistakes? Slowing down when changing lanes and not using turn signals, but they'll eventually learn.

The kids started driving in March after school. They're young. If the student is not 14, but will turn 14 before the end of the year, they can take the class, but are only allowed to drive with Mr. Phelps.

“I get 5-6 hours with each student behind the wheel,” he said. “We get experience in many different situations, but that really isn't enough time to make them good drivers. The more they are able to drive with their parents or another trusted adult, the better off they will be.”

Mr. Phelps and his trainees drive on many different road surfaces and types. They drive on gravel and paved county roads and on highways. They spend quite a lot of time driving in Arnold, Broken Bow, Gothenburg, and North Platte, and finally, they drive down Interstate 80. Once they have done all of that, and



(From left) Jeremiah Morgan, Braxton Green and Declan Teahon are three of the 22 student drivers who will get behind the wheel this semester at Arnold Public School. - Debbie Connelly photo

Mr. Phelps feels they are ready, they'll go to Broken Bow and take their driving test to get their School Permit (SCP) - an upgrade from the School Learner's Permit (LPE) that they can get at age 14-plus. With the LPE, the student is allowed unsupervised driving to school or work outside large cities.

“If I feel they need more time behind the wheel than the six hours, I will give them the time,” said Mr. Phelps.

An important part of learning

Arnold is now one of the few Nebraska schools

that offers school-based driver's education. It was common in Nebraska in the 1970s, but a big study in 1983 changed all that. As a result many students now use private driving schools or online courses to meet state requirements, but it comes at a high cost to families. Results of the 1983 study have since been questioned, and driver's education remains highly recommended because it significantly increases road safety by reducing crash risks, traffic tickets, and fatalities for new drivers.

“We might be one of the

only ones around that still offers driver's ed,” said Arnold Schools Superintendent Joel Morgan. “It's still a pretty important piece for us, just like any other class we offer. Even with Mr. Mohr's retirement, Mr. Phelps got his driver's endorsement. Dropping driver's ed wasn't even discussed. When we bought the new student driver mini van, one of the features that was important to me was a 360 camera that a lot of vehicles have. It's important to have those safety features. It's pretty valuable for kids when they're learning to drive.”

The superintendent, who has two young sons of his own, said he was surprised at a report released by the Federal Highway Administration, stating that only 25 percent of 16-year-olds obtained a driver's license in 2021, marking a significant decrease from previous years, and that trend continues.

“It shocks me, because kids around here want to drive. They're on their scooters and looking forward to it,” he said.



50 Year Membership

Legion members Mike Harvey, John Phillips and Charles Foran and Sons of the American Legion member Tiff Varney presented “Doug” Robert D Lanham (3rd from left) with his 50 Year Continuous Legion Membership Certificate on March 11. Doug actually came home sixty years ago and joined the Legion in 1966, but due to something he doesn't remember, his membership lapsed and he rejoined. He said then-Commander Jim Holman tried to overturn the lapse, but couldn't. We thank Doug for his military service in Vietnam and his community involvement and service since returning. - Courtesy photo

AVFD Update

Submitted by:
Andrew Tickle,
Arnold Fire Chief

This past week was a very active one for the Arnold Fire Department.

On Wednesday, we held our regular monthly training night. Training is critical to ensuring our members are prepared to respond safely and effectively when our community needs us.

On Thursday afternoon and evening, we were requested to assist with the Halsey Forest Fire, now known as the 203 Fire. Shortly after that request, we were also asked to assist with the Maxwell Fire. Since Halsey requested us first, and the fire was only a few miles north of our district with the potential of moving toward our area, we responded there. We sent two rigs with

four personnel to assist. During that time, several members remained at the fire hall to ensure we were ready to respond to anything else that might occur locally. Our crews returned late that night from the Halsey fire.

On Friday and Saturday, several of our EMTs attended a conference in Kearney for continuing education hours. At the same time, other department members were helping friends and community members who were being affected by what is now known as the Cottonwood Fire. Our department member Amanda was also deployed with the Red Cross to assist those impacted by the fire. In addition to that, we still handled our regular calls throughout the day. Due

See AVFD Update,
Continued on page 8.

Carroll Street Courts Project Begins



Village employees were tearing out concrete and the basketball hoops from the old court on North Carroll Street last Thursday afternoon. All of the chain link fencing was also removed, thanks to Casey Connell. An interesting note is that the basketball hoop posts, which are original and made from irrigation pipe, will be repurposed to save money. The removal project will pave the way for a new, larger pickleball/basketball/tennis court. Superintendent Eric Holmberg said last week that the next step will be leveling out the ground in preparation for new cement that will be poured by Dalton Greeley. Depending on Greeley's schedule, the pour is expected towards the end of March. - Debbie Connelly photo