



The Arnold Sentinel

“Serving the South Loup River Valley”

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Sandhills Open Road Challenge Brings Racers, Families, and Economic Development to Arnold

Editor’s note: The following story was released by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development in July. It’s reported that the writer, Brennan Hallock, was so intrigued by this story, that he and his family will be visiting Arnold during SORC this year for their vacation.

Hallock said in an on-line post, “The Nebraska Sandhills are a genuinely incredible part of Nebraska that spread across 19,000 square miles of the state, and racing cars on those roads is even more incredible.”

When Joe Shown inches his Corvette to the starting line at the Sandhills Open Road Challenge, he pinches his wrist to be sure the race is really happening. Shown has competed in all 25 annual races. Yet he still can’t believe his far-fetched idea has developed into a summer tradition in the small town of Arnold, Nebraska.

Every year, on the second weekend of August, approximately 150 contestants from across the nation (and even Canada) gather in rural Nebraska for the Sandhills Open Road Challenge. They race on a two-lane country road that winds 29 miles north from Arnold to Dunning, and then 26

miles back driving on rough pavement. Over a quarter-century, the annual event has impacted Arnold and the surrounding communities by generating nearly \$2 million through the non-profit that organizes the race. This has been put back into the community through public services, city improvements, and supporting local education.

S-curves and a pipe dream

Shortly after moving to the Sandhills to work as a recruiter for the U.S. Army Reserve, Shown had a meeting scheduled in the town of Dunning. “I always used to look for different ways to get from point A to point B, and

I saw on the map there was a little road that ran north out of Arnold to Dunning,” he explained. He took the route, and when he reached the top of Judkins Hill he was stunned by the beautiful panorama of the Nebraska Sandhills.

“At the top of the hill there is a series of S-curves or—in racing jargon—‘chicanes,’” he said. They brought to his mind an article he had read about a Formula One world champion who had honed his skills by driving the curved blacktop roads in Scotland. When Shown saw the Sandhills terrain he thought, Wow, this is just like what he was talking about! He imagined how incredible it would be to shut down the road and race cars on it. But for the time being he set aside the idea as a pipe dream.

Why can’t you do it in Nebraska?

Years later, after Shown retired, he decided to buy a 1991 ZR-1 Corvette in

Hartington, Nebraska. He had some disposable income, and he wanted to drive a car like the one he used to race for fun in his younger years. As he was coming home after purchasing the Corvette, he decided to take the back road from Dunning to Arnold. Cruising along the scenic byway revived his idea of hosting a road race. I know in Nevada they closed a road for a racing event, Shown thought. If you can do it in Nevada, why can’t you do it in Nebraska?

That evening he met local bar owner Jim Pelton at the downtown bar and asked how to make his dream a reality. “Don Olson,” Pelton replied, referring him to the man whose support would be needed to approve the race. “His name is in the Gothenburg phone directory.”

A sold-out event for 20+ years

Shown made the call. Olson—who was county supervisor—listened, but he

was skeptical of Shown’s idea. Even so, he encouraged Shown to present the idea to the county commissioners. After pitching the race to them, Shown and a group of supporters shifted their efforts into

high gear. They got permission from landowners along the route, organized community meetings, and tirelessly sought to

See Open Road Challenge, page 8.

26th Annual Sandhills Open Road Challenge Is Aug. 6-8

On August 5th, more than 160 high performance cars will converge on Arnold, Nebraska, for the 26th Annual Sandhills Open Road Challenge.

The event will begin on August 6th with the 22-mile Loup 2 Loup Open Road Race between Halsey and Purdum, Nebraska. The One Mile Shoot Out will be on Friday, August 7th, to be held 14 miles north of Cozad, followed by an afternoon car show in downtown

Arnold.

Cars and drivers will line up in Arnold on Saturday, August 8th for an 8:30 a.m. start of the 56-mile open road race between Arnold and Dunning, Nebraska.

The event will culminate in the evening with a free will donation barbeque and award ceremony in the Arnold Community Park.

Event schedule details can be found on page 8 and at www.sorcrace.com.

Striking the Target: Youth Compete in 4-H Shooting Sports



Conner Pelster (left) and Titus Coleman (right) compete in air rifle at the county fair. The boys were among 4-H members who competed in several disciplines.

Shooting sports for kids in America have been growing in popularity across the nation, and this area of Central Nebraska is no exception. The South Loup 4-H Club signed up 34 kids, ages 8-18, this year – many of whom competed at the recent Custer County Fair.

Reasons for the sport’s growing popularity are numerous. It doesn’t require high speed or massive physical size, allowing children of all body types and athletic abilities to play on a fair field. Boys and girls often compete on the same teams, with strict safety rules enforced. The program focuses strongly on personal discipline, mental focus, self-esteem, and responsibility. It’s a sport that can carry you through life and some-

See Striking the Target, page 2.



Senior Josie Lehmkuhler aims with an air pistol in fair competition.

Memorial Money Appreciated

The Arnold Volunteer Fire Department received memorial money in memory of past member Chris Hough. The department decided to use the money to purchase Milwaukee 193 piece Class B Type III Pack-out first aid kits for all of the fire trucks. A memorial label was attached to the kits. Having the kits in all of the fire trucks will give firemen access to items needed to help take care of emergency needs while out on fire or emergency calls. We appreciate the Hough family thinking of us at their time of loss.

Pictured with one of the kits are: (from left) Robbi Smith, Dave Smith, Dalton Swopes and Cam Meyer.

