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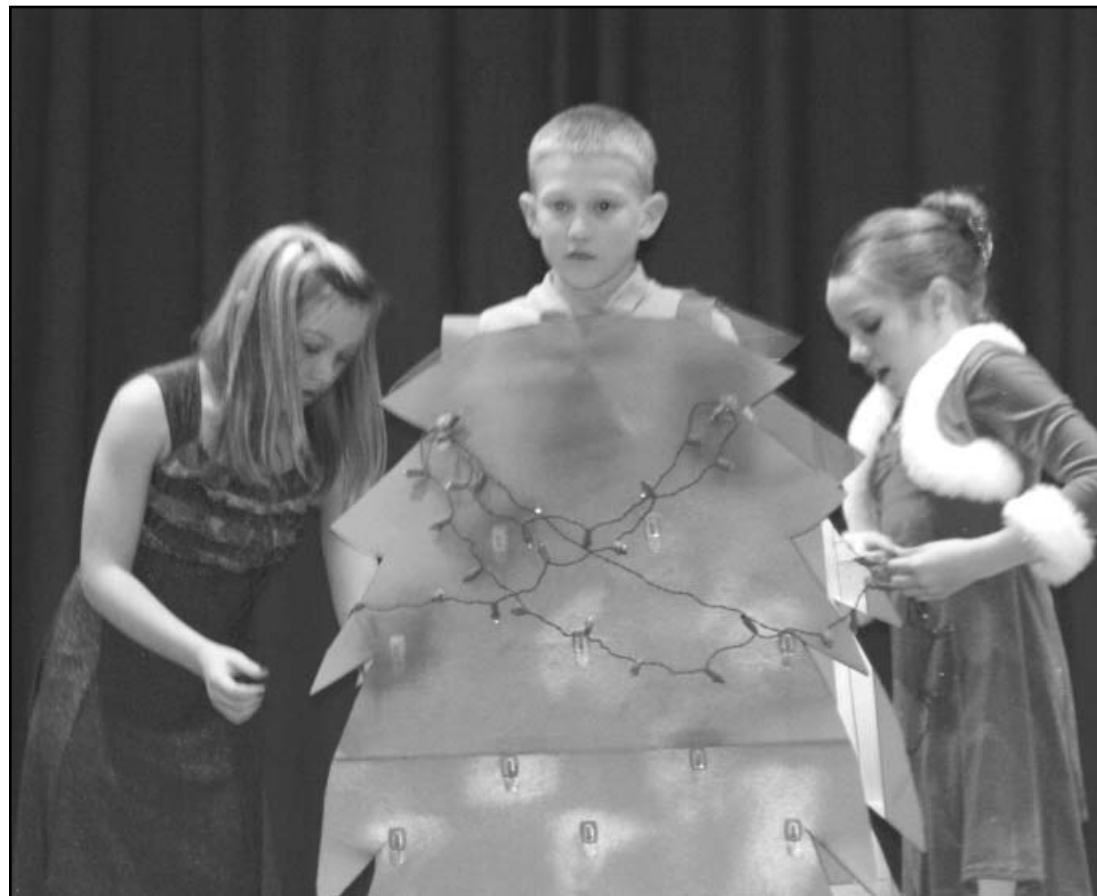
The Arnold Sentinel

CUSTER COUNTY, ARNOLD, NEBRASKA 69120

(USPS 032480)

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LETA CONNELL PHOTO

Decorating the Christmas Tree

Fourth graders Madison Reed (left) and Toni Oberg decorate the tree (played by Cade Connell) while singing "Let's Decorate the Christmas Tree" during the annual Arnold School Christmas program December 7. All music students in Grades K-12 performed during the program, including the school band and choir. Instructor Chrysanne Bailey directed the program.

School Board Approves Interlocal Agreement to Share Superintendent

By Janet Larreau

With money owed to the bank and itself, come January, School District #89 should start seeing some progress in the way of the budget.

Superintendent Robert Brown gave this hopeful report at the December 7 regular school board meeting, saying that, typically, a large amount of tax money will come in in January. How much will come in? Brown said that will depend on how people pay their taxes.

In the mean time, the school district will borrow money in December to help pay bills and then wait.

Brown reminded Board members that the school district has budgeted \$190,000.00 to build up a cash reserve, with \$90,000.00 of that amount making up for delinquent taxes.

"We underspent by over \$100,000.00 last year and hope to do so again this year," said Brown. "Even though the school underspent, it didn't end up in the good. This was the first year in a long time that we have been able to build a cushion. Years ago, the school was able to build up a cash reserve. For the last number of years, in order to stay under the levy limit, we have budgeted what we expect to spend."

Interlocal Agreement to Share Superintendent Approved

During the meeting, Board members voted unanimously to approve an interlocal agreement to share a superintendent with Callaway for two years beginning in 2010-2011. After the motion was made and seconded, Board members held their vote until a number of questions were answered.

Board member Diana Coleman asked if the school would be locked into a contract for two years if her answer was yes.

Superintendent Brown said voting on the agreement would tell Callaway that Arnold does want to share; the contract and details would then be worked out between the boards.

"If it costs more, we can still back out," said Board member Duane Bowers.

Board member Al Bishop said he worries about the day

when Arnold might have to look at cutting teachers, instead of administration.

"I don't know how I would feel about cutting more teachers," he said.

Bishop asked if a stipend for administration would be part of the contract.

2006-2007 data collected from 184 Nebraska schools shows that Arnold is among 102 - or 55 percent - of schools that offer Early Retirement Incentive Plans, otherwise known as stipends. Eighty percent of schools offering ERIPs are in Board Policy and only 20 percent are in Negotiated Agreements, as is the case with Arnold. Currently, Arnold offers stipends to its two administrators as well as teachers.

The purpose of stipends offers financial incentives, reduces costs to the school district by replacing maximum salaried employees with lesser salaried employees, and provides a balance of employee experience. To be eligible for the program, a certified employee must have completed 10 years of continuous credited service in the employment of the school district immediately prior to the effective date of early separation.

The current benefits are calculated on the teacher's contract salary for the last year of service, and how long they have provided credited service. A teacher with 10-14 years of credited service is paid 50 percent of their salary; a teacher with 15-19 years will be paid 75 percent; and a teacher with 20 or more years will be paid 100 percent of the contract salary. The benefit is paid in two equal payments on September 15 of the calendar year of the teacher's resignation, and on January 15 of the following calendar year.

The certified staff of 2008-2009 are grandfathered in at the previous rates of 10-14 years of service - 90 percent; 15-19 years of service - 95 percent and 20-plus - 100 percent.

A separating employee also has the opportunity to continue health insurance benefits as may be permitted by the provisions of the Comprehensive Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act.

District patron Shane Cool attended the meeting to express his concern about

administrators receiving stipends.

"What the district is carrying is to encourage early retirement of teachers. If it is designed for administration, then that should be changed. (The school) is carrying a huge liability when you add those stipends up," said Cool.

Brown said Callaway does not offer stipends.

Principal's Report

Principal and activities director Mike Harvey gave a sports co-op update. At the next meeting of the co-op committee on December 16, coaches will be assigned, and the new mascot and colors will be voted on by

Continued on page 2.

Arnold Elementary School Honored Nationally

Recycling Program Wins Award

Arnold Elementary School was honored Friday, December 4, at this year's annual Keep America Beautiful National Conference for distinguishing itself as an exemplary affiliate organization. Taking second place in its category, the school was honored for its outstanding community waste reduction program.

Arnold Elementary School was nominated for this award by Keep Loup Basin Beautiful. They will present the award to the student body on January 8 between the girls' and boys' basketball games. You can show your support for the school by congratulating all the students, teachers and administrators and by coming to the presentation. Keep Loup Basin Beautiful is sponsored by the Loup Basin RC&D organization.

The 56th Annual Keep America Beautiful National Conference, held in Washington, D.C., brought together award-winning affiliates from across the country to share best practices and celebrate the successes of the last 12 months. The Keep America Beautiful Affiliate Awards are open to all Keep America Beautiful affiliates for program activities during the 12-month period from July 1, 2008, through June 30, 2009. The honored affiliates encourage individuals to make simple daily choices and to engage in volunteer activities that improve their communities and the local environment.

"It is my privilege to celebrate Arnold Elementary School and its dedication to improving the quality of life in its community while protecting the environment," said Matthew McKenna, president and CEO of Keep America Beautiful, Inc. "Schools like Arnold serve as influential and inspiring leaders in our national effort to keep America beautiful."

Arnold Elementary School took second place in the waste reduction category for its Creative Recycling Program. With the help of Keep Loup Basin Beautiful, the program included various educational



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and clean-up projects such as "The Three R's - Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle" project.

Fourth grade teacher Berni Crow, who presented "The Three R's" program to the entire elementary as part of the STEP program last year, said she was surprised at getting this high honor nationally. She was invited to help receive the award at Washington, D.C., but was unable to attend.

Keep America Beautiful, Inc., established in 1953, is the nation's largest volunteer-based community action and education organization. This national nonprofit forms public-private partnerships and programs that engage individuals to take greater responsibility for improving their community environments.

"Santa, Shoppin' & Movie Day" is Saturday

The annual "Santa, Shoppin' & Movie Day" - a day that will give parents a chance to shop locally while the children watch a movie at the Rialto and visit with Santa - is set for Saturday, December 19. The free movie will start at 3:00 p.m., with a break at 4:00 p.m. for Santa's visit, which will include treats and the opportunity to have pictures taken with Santa. The movie will then continue to 5:00 p.m.

Weather permitting, Chamber reports there might be hayrack rides.

Businesses will be offering specials, and some will be extending their hours.



KENDRA VEIRS PHOTO

In Memory of The Children

(Left) Ninety-one shiny stars decorate a 12-foot memory tree in the lobby of the Arnold Community Center. The stars were hung during the local Compassionate Friends 2009 World Wide Candle Lighting ceremony, and the tree will remain there through the holidays.

During the program, poems were read and songs were played.

Residents who participated in the program brought a picture of their deceased child, and at 7:00 p.m., candles were lit in memory of the children to join the wave of light that goes around the world for one hour in memory of all children.

Barb Varney, who organizes the event with help from several residents, said the stars date back to children who were lost in 1960 to the present.