



# The Arnold Sentinel

## Reed's Food Center Goes "Green"

### Store Updates to Energy Efficient Cases

By Janet Larreau

When the cost of overhead to run a small-town grocery store doesn't pencil out, the trend is to down-size or simply shut the door and walk away. John and Gail Reed, owners of Reed's Food Center in Arnold, are keeping costs down and their door open by "going green."

John said even with equipment that had been updated only four or five years ago, recouping the store's energy costs just wasn't feasible. In the first five months of 2010, the cost of electricity was around \$11,500.00. In the next four months, paying summer rates, that amount jumped to some \$16,500.00, and the year wasn't even over.

John and Gail began discussing their options 1 1/2 years ago. At first, John considered replacing only the freezers and spoke with Pinnacle Bank Manager Larry Moran. Larry found information from the Nebraska Department of Energy that there were low interest loans available, which John said, made it feasible to replace everything. The total cost to upgrade came in at \$197,000.00.

"We piggybacked that to get a low energy grant through the USDA for \$49,000.00," said John. "Larry and the girls did all of the paperwork. They really worked hard."

On February 3, the store

began replacing all high energy equipment with energy efficient equipment. By the third week in February, all of the cases were in place and re-setting began.

John said the cost to run the old cases was about \$1.00 a day per fluorescent bulb per door. Just one frozen food case could cost \$300.00 to \$400.00 per month to operate. The cost for new LED lighting alone will pay for itself in just 10 months.

"(The bulbs) produce less heat and use very little electricity," said John.

The compressor system, which used to be in the basement, is now on the main level, and takes 22 hp to run the whole store, compared to the old 42 hp. Temperature sensors in each case will maintain a constant temperature. If one goes down, a spare will come on and maintain that case. An alarm system is tied into the phone system, and will first call John. If there is no answer, the system will go to the refrigeration company. Whoever is there can dial up on the computer, locate the problem and possibly re-set the case without traveling to Arnold.

"Hopefully, running down to the store will be a thing of the past, and the repair bills should go away," said John.

The new equipment will keep costs down, the perishables will stay fresher longer

and there will be less freezer burn.

The old equipment was scrapped, and the money will be donated to the high school athletic fund.

John said with the USDA grant, and a 50 to 60 percent savings on utility bills, it should take only eight years to pay off the loan.

"My \$100,000.00 question that I get all the time now is, 'What are you going to do about the floor?'" said John.

And the answer is: the floor will be replaced in the future. John is currently waiting on bids for installation of an industrial, wood grain, low maintenance floor.

Gail and the Reeds' granddaughter, Madison, are painting the walls, and Madison has a special design in mind for the front of the store. When all is finished, the store will hold a re-grand-opening.

"We did this project as an investment back to our community," said John. "This was our fifth upgrade. It was either do this or just start shutting cases down. If we did that, people would go elsewhere. We decided this has been our home since 1979, and the community has been pretty good to us. We wanted to give the town a nice store to shop in. If we decide to sell in five or six years, the store will be all updated and a going business."

John, who is the current president of the Arnold Economic

Development Corporation, said the AEDC's priority is to maintain the services the town has.

"I'm optimistic," he said. "Everything goes in cycles. The community can get out of their town what they put into it, is my feeling."



JANET LARREAU PHOTOS

Reed's Food Center store clerk Jody Bailey stocks produce in new energy efficient coolers. The store owners recently updated all of their cases and have seen a dramatic change in energy consumption.

