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# December Newsletter

## Join us as we aim

to create a unified voice, inspiring increased environmental awareness and land stewardship in Clayton County, Iowa.

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## Upcoming CCCAN Events:

- **December CCCAN Board of Directors meeting** (open to the public) *6pm Tuesday December 18th, Keystone Area Education Agency*

# Archaeologist couple in Garnavillo build energy efficient home with future in mind

Archaeologists investigate hundreds of years into the past, but local archaeologists Laura Elsinger and Chris Schoen chose to envision generations into the future when building their dream home. Elsinger and Schoen both grew up in the Driftless region: Schoen in LaCrosse, and Elsinger in an 1840s stone farmhouse in Clayton County. Their mutual reverence for the woodlands of the region led them to put down roots near Garnavillo. Their background in archaeology field work and their lifelong pursuit of conservation launched their journey to build a home that fits their land stewardship ethic and is equipped to serve families for generations to come.

“Seven generation thinking [dictates that] for every decision you make, you must consider the effect it will have on the next seven generations,” explained Elsinger. This Great Law of the [Iroquois](#) instructed stewards of the land to be mindful of the consequences of their daily decisions, projecting the effects more than 100 years into the future. With this stewardship ethic in mind, Elsinger and Schoen considered their home building adventure from a longitudinal perspective: planning ahead for their own aging, anticipating the limited availability of petroleum products and their impact on the environment, producing their own solar energy, and even the disposal of the home’s building materials. [Read more HERE.](#)

## Local students collect pumpkins, divert organic waste from landfill







Ms. Gritzner's Environmental Project Monitoring class teamed up with Turkey River Farm to collect over two tons of pumpkins and decorative gourds during their Pumpkin Round up last month. The goal was to divert organic waste from the landfill and feed it to livestock instead. [Read more from the Guttenberg Press HERE.](#)



WINTER  
ADVENTURES IN  
CLAYTON  
COUNTY



Winter Adventures and Beauty in  
Unsuspecting Places



Winter in Clayton County, or any part of the Driftless region for that matter, can provide an adventurous excuse to get outside and escape cabin fever. It also provides a rare chance to discover some unique scenes that only winter and cold temperatures can create. The best part is you can find some of these spots, and literally experience a “close to home” remote and silent micro-wilderness area, as part of a very short hike right here in Clayton County.

I’ve always known that small stream or gully openings that connect to the Turkey or Volga River can lead to some fascinating places. One such place I recently visited was just past Motor Mill. If you park at the Mill and hike just a short distance down river on the adjacent gravel road you will come upon two very unique places that words simply cannot describe in enough detail. The first is an unsuspecting ridge and rock outcropping you will see on your left as you walk down the road along the Turkey River. To get on top of that rock outcropping, you have to hike a few hundred feet along the land-facing left base of the rock bluff until you see the hill sloping all the way to the top of the ridge. It’s a short, scenic, imagination grabbing, and vigorous hike to the top. The slower you go the further your imagination will take you.

Once you get to the top and walk out to the rock cropping tip of the ridge, the winter hike and escape from the house will have been well worth it. As you look out from the end of that ridge you will have quite a view. Part of that view tells the story of the travels of an ancient Turkey River channel that once bypassed the historic Mill completely. The big circular open part of the river valley on your left is an ancient sweeping bend of the Turkey River in the days when it flowed down a completely different channel around the right side of the Mill. When I stare out at it, my mind wanders to the days when the river was flowing around that bend. I think about what things must have been like in those days, not too long ago, when no human roamed the hills of Clayton County or North America.

If the view from the bluff-top ridge alone doesn’t fulfill your winter wanderlust, there is more. Just hike back down to the bottom of the ridge and get back on the river road. Keep hiking down river along the road until you reach a cement stream crossing that allows the small stream to flow over the top of the road. Looking upstream, you will see an opening to a canyon where that unsuspecting tiny stream flows out of. Just a short way up that canyon, you will find a hidden paradise that will drop your jaw in amazement. The most astonishing part is the realization of the long-term power and natural rock carving talent of that tiny stream. It was the natural handy-work of that tiny stream over time, which was in charge of carving out and transporting all those mammoth-size boulders you’ll encounter on your hike up the canyon. I cannot reveal the remaining treasures to be encountered in that hidden canyon or how it dramatically changes in each season because I want you to get out and experience it for yourself. It’s all part of many such short winter adventures right here in Clayton County. If you want an animated tour guide, I’d love an excuse to escape the real world and go back up that canyon myself!

