Occasionally circumstances come together and something special happens. So it was when Dick “Coach” Haselton stopped in to the district office a little more than a year ago. Coach Haselton had dropped in to visit with “someone in charge,” and wanted to know if the conservation district would be interested in purchasing his property on the Kishwaukee River.

The Haselton’s owned approximately 15-acres of land sandwiched between two properties already purchased by the conservation district as part of an ongoing effort to preserve important conservation lands along the Kishwaukee River. Their offer would allow the conservation district to connect these parcels and expand the opportunity for public enjoyment. There was, however one issue – funding.

The Boone County Conservation District (BCCD) relies almost entirely on grants and/or donations to fund conservation projects involving land acquisition. In this case the property included a home and two out buildings. Improvements like the home and out-buildings cannot be funded by most grants and this was a situation where that restriction was in effect. The BCCD sought technical assistance from Openlands, a non-profit organization that assists agencies like the BCCD. Emy Brawley, Director of Land Preservation with Openlands met with June and Dick Haselton and worked out a creative solution to the funding problem.

June and Coach Haselton elected to donate their home and out-buildings to the BCCD; and the BCCD agreed to a life-use arrangement with them for the use of the home. These unique options provided a win/win situation for everyone involved. The purchase of this 15-acre parcel allowed the conservation district to connect a corridor of nearly 125-acres of important conservation land along a ¼ of a mile stretch of the Kishwaukee River.

The acquisition was also made possible by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Open Land Trust grant awarded to the BCCD for land acquisitions in the Crow’s Foot Conservation Study Area. The appraised fair market value of the property and improvements was $320,000 with the improvements being valued at $115,000. The Haseltons donated the value of the improvements and the BCCD purchased the land with $200,029.02 from the OLT grant funds.

Our new property is graced with a 1.3 acre pond, which is now glowing with the golden color of reflected light and leaves. Wetland pools left still by the changing course of a moody river contrast this golden glow with mottled tones of green and grey. And, it would be remiss not to mention the river traversing the bottomland since it is home to so many kinds of aquatic creatures. A remnant oak savanna stands tall and stout above the north bank of the Kishwaukee. These trees hang their canopy of burly branches out over a sweeping bend in the river - looking as if the land is trying to gather the northward churning water into its grasp. But the river won’t accept the embrace and leans its’ current back to the south before winding its way westward. The river and the land are intricately connected here.

June and Coach Haselton understand this connection and expressed their desire to see “the people” get a chance to enjoy it as they have. Together they shared a few memories with us. Simple things like skating on the river ice or watching wood ducks raise their brood. It was easy to see their love for this place and each other as they shared these stories. Now, thanks to their generosity, all of us can appreciate and enjoy the essence of this natural setting.
Several conservation areas will be closed for the season beginning on November 1st. The seasonal closures will include sites that receive the lowest use. Circumstances prevent the District from keeping all of its sites open throughout the year. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause our patrons.

The most heavily used sites will remain open throughout the late fall and winter season with the exception of closures associated with the district’s archery program – (please check the district website for information about those dates).

The following sites will remain OPEN after November 15th:

- Spencer Conservation Area
- LIB Conservation Area
- Beaver Bluffs Conservation Area

All other BCCD sites will be closed for the season. Again, we apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.

Prescribed Fire Season

Conservation District land management staff will be conducting prescribed burns at several of our conservation areas this fall and in the early spring of 2014. Prescribed fire is an essential and efficient management practice for the health of our native ecosystems, including prairies, savannas, and woodlands. Fire helps return nutrients to the soil, helps control undesirable exotic weeds and shrubs, increases blooming and seed production among our native plans, and stimulates the growth of our native prairie and woodland plant species. District staff manage the burns to minimize smoke on highways and neighboring properties.

BCCD Safety Watch Is a Volunteer Success

The BCCD Safety watch program was developed in 2011 by a local college student, Shawn Kalas and BCCD staff. It was formed as a way for volunteers to acquire heart healthy activity while helping to keep our conservation areas safe.

The program was created to improve the safety of our conservation areas by making a presence known at our sites and trails, to be eyes and ears for hazards and criminal activity. This would help to ensure that our citizens and visitors have a safe and enjoyable experience.

Since its inception, Safety Watch volunteers have been walking and riding BCCD conservation area trails on a daily basis. Volunteers notify BCCD staff of any unsafe trail conditions such as downed trees or trail erosion, check for dog park tags, and report vandalism.

Having a daily presence of Safety Watch volunteers in the conservation areas helps deter vandalism and other negative activities. In one instance, Safety Watch volunteers called paramedics when they came upon a visitor in need of medical attention.

Safety Watch volunteers are identified by their bright orange and yellow vests and name tags, or in the case of “volunteer dogs” who are unofficial Safety Watch volunteers, bright green bandanas.

Two “volunteer dogs” Duke and Shiloh regularly walk the grounds of Spencer Park with their owner, and Safety Watch volunteer, Leon Krause.

If you see a Safety Watch volunteer when you are out enjoying one of the conservation areas, please stop and thank them for helping to keep our Conservation District safe.
The District wants everyone to discover the benefits of recreation. For families considering any of our programs who have special considerations, such as diabetes, asthma or physical or cognitive disabilities, your participation is welcome too. The earlier you contact us so we can talk with you about how to make your experience safe and fun, the more likely it will be safe and fun!

Monthly Meetings
(All Meetings held at the Roger D. Gustafson Nature Center are open to the public)

BCCD Board of Trustees
Wednesdays at 4:00 p.m., December 18th, January 15th and February 19th.
Gardeners of America
Tuesdays at 2:30 p.m., February 25th. No meeting at the District in December and January.

Holiday Walk
Saturday, December 7th
6:00 p.m.—8:00 p.m.
FREE
Stroll along a luminary lit pathway and visit our authentic log cabins (where they might be serving goodies), eat popcorn popped fresh over an open fire, and see how Christmas was celebrated in the past. Held at the Roger Gustafson Nature Center Festival Ground. Call (815) 547-7935 for information.

Heirloom Garden Seed Sale
Saturday, February 15th
9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.
Heirloom seeds from our 5 ethnic gardens and other suppliers will be on sale at a location yet to be determined. Please call (815) 547-7935 for more details (Cash and check only, please).

The District will be Closed On
Nov. 28th and 29th
Thanksgiving
Dec. 23rd thru Jan. 5
Christmas and New Years
Feb. 17th
President’s Day

Snowshoeing
January and February
If you have a group that would like to learn how to snowshoe the Boone County Conservation District will be offering snowshoe classes this year. Please call (815) 547-7935 for more information.
If you are interested in joining our staff on a snowshoe trek, please call to have your name placed on the list. If the weather cooperates you will be notified as to where and when the hike will take place. BCCD has recently purchased a number of snowshoes that will be available to rent for these hikes.

Eagle Watch
Saturday, January 25th
7:30 a.m.—6:30 p.m.
Join us for a day of eagle watching along the Illinois River at Starved Rock. There are programs featuring live birds of prey, nature seminars and exhibits. You can bring your own lunch or eat at the lodge. Bring binoculars if you have them. The cost to ride in our mini bus is $25 a person. There is also a minimal charge to use the trolley at Starved Rock. We will leave the Nature Center at 7:30 a.m. Space is limited. Preregister and prepayment is required, call (815) 547-7935.

Summer Camp Information
Camp staff applications are available on our website and will be accepted starting February 1st.
Camp registration begins April 1st. Registration information will be available on our website in March.

Winter School Program Sign-Ups
Sign-ups for the 1st grade winter school program will begin at 7:00 a.m. on Wednesday, December 4, 2013. Call to reserve your date.
The program dates are January 8 thru February 28, 2014

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The District is looking for a refrigerator in good working condition, ear corn for our squirrels and paper grocery bags. If you can help us out with our wish list, either drop it off at the nature center or in the case of a refrigerator, and you need help getting it to us, just give us a call at (815) 547-7935 and we will be glad to help. Thank you.

Our one room schoolhouse is available for programs. Call our office at 815-547-7935 for more information or to schedule a day long program led by BCCD staff, or lead your own program in the schoolhouse. Fees apply.

The BCCD would like to thank all the volunteers who helped at our Autumn Pioneer Festival. Without volunteers this event would not be possible.

Thank you.

The District wants everyone to discover the benefits of recreation. For families considering any of our programs who have special considerations, such as diabetes, asthma or physical or cognitive disabilities, your participation is welcome too. The earlier you contact us so we can talk with you about how to make your experience safe and fun, the more likely it will be safe and fun!
Kid’s Ice Fishing Workshop
A FREE workshop for kids 5—15. Lunch provided.

Saturday, February 1, 2014
9:00 a.m.—12:00 noon

Workshop will start at the Roger D. Gustafson Nature Center
603 N. Appleton Road, Belvidere, IL

Bring any ice fishing equipment you have,
limited rigs available.

You must preregister for this program.
Registration begins January 6, 2014.