

# MINIKANI ALUMNI COMMUNITY

## NEWSLETTER

October 2009  
Volume 1, Issue 1

### Inside this Issue

- 1 The Minikani Alumni Community
- 2 Jen Feltz, Executive Director of Minikani
- 2 Check Out These Websites
- 2 Nature Notes
- 3 Alumni Weekend
- 3 Future Events
- 4 Holiday Ball
- 5 Ragger's Point
- 5 I Remember...

Thanks To: Mike Auda, Jen Feltz, Perry LaRoque, Andy Mendelson, and Tom Trester.

Bruce Rasmussen, Editor  
BruceRass@wi.rr.com

### WELCOME

Put a group of motivated former Minikani Staff together with a common goal, mix in some great memories and a desire to keep the "Spirit of Minikani" and what do you get? Only the best, right?

What you get is a living, breathing, Alumni Community with a life of its own. A lot of preparation work has already gone into creating this group – meetings, research, buzz words, many phone calls, suggestions, Articles of Incorporation, expectations, pages and pages of emails, Mission Statements, laughs, 501(c)(3)'s, and hours and hours of work, gladly given in the name of the "Minikani Alumni Community".

### Web Site

In addition to planning activities, a large undertaking of the Community is to create a web site that would list everyone who ever worked at Minikani. Former staff could go to the web site, click on either a year or a name, and get current information about other former staff. People like you could choose to include as much or as little about themselves in that information. The goal of the Alumni Community is to "find

EVERY staff member who has ever worked at Minikani, and have them join the official mailing list." They then plan to keep everyone updated with current events and other important information.

### The Group Is Growing

Here's what you can do: 1) Go to the web site - see the list on page 2 - and sign up. It's easy to do, and only takes your email address, name, and year that you first worked at Minikani. 2) Re-connect with any other Minikani Alumni and let them know about the web site. Give them a call or drop them a note. With at least 50 staff members every summer, there's a great potential waiting for all of us. 🌲





## Jen Feltz

*Minikani Executive Director*

Minikani’s new Executive Director, Jen Feltz, has been “honored to meet many wonderful and passionate Alumni over the past 10 months.” And believe me, the feeling is mutual. Jen’s excitement for her job at Minikani is contagious – in a good way. “Minikani had a great summer of 2009.” she states. “99% of campers reported that they would recommend Minikani to a friend.”

This fall brings Environmental Education, Conferences, Retreats, Equestrian programs, and Early Childhood Education programs to Minikani – and she’s excited about them all.

Finally, she’s excited to work with the new Alumni Committee, and offers this invitation to all Alumni: “Please know that you always have a home here at Minikani. If you are ever in the area, I hope you will stop by and say hello—if you have a minute to drop me a quick email as way of introduction, that would be great too. I’m looking forward to meeting everyone and hope that we will see many of you soon!” Jen’s email address is [jfeltz@ymcamke.org](mailto:jfeltz@ymcamke.org)



## Check Out These Websites

### [www.minikanistafflodge.com](http://www.minikanistafflodge.com)

This is the main site for the Minikani Alumni Community Website. Once here, you can click to join the official mailing list. You can also keep up-to-date on all the current happenings of the Community. Other headings include Calendar, Alumni Board, Photos, and Alumni Weekend.

### [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)


You can join the social networking and become a member of Facebook. Be sure to join the “Minikani Alumni Community” at this site. Your Minikani friends will grow by leaps and bounds right here.

### [www.minikani.org](http://www.minikani.org)

This is the official web site of YMCA Camp Minikani. At this site you can get information about dates and even register for camp next summer. For those who just can’t wait, there’s even a clock that ticks away the seconds until camp starts. And there is also a collection of Alumni Photos for you to enjoy.


## Nature Notes

*By Bruce*

Next time you see the caterpillar of the *Isabella* Tiger Moth crawling across a path or road, stop and take a close look. It will be about 2” long, have a body covered with stiff black bristles with a band of brown right around the middle. It is commonly called a Woolly Bear Caterpillar, and the size of the brown middle, according to folklore, will predict the weather this winter. A narrow brown band indicates a severe winter, and a thicker middle indicates a mild winter. Do you think the Woolly Bears are knowledgeable about global warming? 

## Contributions

*By You*

No, you’re not getting ‘hit-up” for some of your hard earned money. Instead, we’d like to know what you are thinking. Please send your ideas, comments, suggestions, and contributions for the Newsletter to [BruceRass@wi.rr.com](mailto:BruceRass@wi.rr.com). Any ideas, suggestions, questions, etc. about the Minikani Alumni Community can also be sent to him and he will forward them to the Alumni Committee. 



## Alumni Weekend

August 22-23, 2009

It started with people gathered around the registration table in front of the new Halquist Lodge, and it ended in the parking lot on Sunday morning with sad good-byes. But in between, the 2009 Alumni Weekend could be summed up in just one simple word – FUN. There were skills, bugles, campfire, meals, songs, password, games, and much, much more.

Who do we have to thank for getting the alumni together for such a weekend? A lot of people helped, but Mike Auda ('97-'03) deserves special credit. Like many former Minikani staff members, he got together with some friends during the year and thought, "Wouldn't it be great if we could get together at camp sometime?" We've all thought something like that, but Mike followed through on the idea. After talking with others, he reserved the weekend after camp for an Alumni Weekend. During the year, momentum grew and grew, and finally 110 people of all ages got together from near and far (Montana, Vermont, California, etc.) to enjoy Minikani once again.



Mike Auda, Alumni Weekend '09


I asked Mike what the primary objective was for organizing the time at camp. He replied, "So that everyone could do their favorite thing." And there were plenty of things to do in the 24 hour weekend. His favorite thing to do at camp? Swim in the lake. Others climbed the rock wall, shot archery, took a nature hike, sailed, played softball, and did crafts. For some, it was "just to be at camp" or "reconnect with friends." It seems like everyone had plenty of fond



Future Campers, Alumni Weekend '09

memories of their time at Minikani, and being back "among the woodlands and the rolling hillsides" was everyone's idea of a fun weekend.

Thanks to Mike and all the others who worked to put on such a great time. Please check out the photos posted on 'www.minikanistafflodge.com' and mark your calendar for next year's weekend, August 21-22, 2010.

You'll be glad you did.. 

## I Didn't Know That...

The term "Minikani Alumni" was originally used to describe campers who returned to Minikani when they became too old to attend the camp. They worked around camp as Kitchen Boys and Jr. Counselors. Eventually, the Leadership Program was developed for these "Alumni".



## Future Events

### Work Weekend

Saturday, October 10, 2009

#### Camp Minikani

Bring the whole family to camp for this bi-annual Work Day. To register, send an RSVP to [perrylaroque@hotmail.com](mailto:perrylaroque@hotmail.com)

### Alumni Holiday Ball

Saturday, December 26, 2009

#### Charles Allis Art Museum

Drinks, dancing, silent auction and more. All proceeds go to Summer 2010 Campership Fund.

### Alumni Weekend

August 21-22, 2010

#### Camp Minikani

Mark your calendar now!



# Holiday Ball

December 26, 2009

Plans are well underway for the Minikani Alumni Holiday Ball to be held at 7:00 pm on Saturday, December 26, 2009. Excitement is already building for this festive event. A very special venue has just been chosen for this event: The Charles Allis Art Museum in Milwaukee. Recognized for its classic elegance, the Charles Allis Art Museum is an ideal spot for a gathering that will appeal to all ages. The museum, located at 1801 N. Prospect Avenue, is home to an art collection that spans more than 2,000 years.



Alumni will enjoy the setting of this historic East Side 1911 Tudor-style mansion as they gather for socializing, music, appetizers, dancing, and more. And to top it all off, all proceeds from the Alumni Holiday Ball will be donated to Camp Minikani to sponsor camperships for Summer, 2010.

- Here's what you can expect for the Holiday Ball:
- ◆ Dancing and great music performed by Myles Hayes and his Jazz Quintet.
  - ◆ Delicious Appetizers and Beverages
  - ◆ A Photo Exhibit from Camp throughout the years.
  - ◆ A Silent Auction to raise money for Minikani Scholarships.
  - ◆ Cocktail attire is suggested.




Thanks are already in order for Myles Hayes and his Jazz Quintet, the Owen Family for donating the printing services, and the Shully family for donating the catering services.

But don't feel left out: There's still plenty you can do to help. We are looking for Donations for the Silent Auction. Donations can come in a monetary form, (in which case we'll purchase an item that the donor has sponsored for the auction) or in the form of a business owner offering a service or product.

We are also looking for photographs for the Photo Exhibit. Poignant and universal photos from camp throughout the years will be displayed at the event, and will also be offered for sale. Proceeds from their sale will also go toward camperships.



Here's what you can do right now: 1) Reserve December 26, 2009 on your calendar. 2) Consider donating to the Silent Auction or the Photo Exhibit. 3) Talk with your friends and encourage them to participate in this Alumni event too.

If you have any questions or can help with donations for the Silent Auction, please email Jenny Risch at [jennyrisch@gmail.com](mailto:jennyrisch@gmail.com) 



# Ragger's Point

*"I would be true..."*

Many campers and staff accepted new challenges this summer at Camp Minikani. Matt Sullivan and Ryan Derus accepted the challenge of the White Rag. Jen Feltz, Executive Director, accepted the challenge of the Purple Rag. Below is a summary of the rags and their challenges.

Blue	Loyalty to God, country and one's best self	12
Silver	Re-dedication to the Christian way of life and values	13
Brown	Service to others	14
Gold	Understanding, concern, and acceptance of others	15
Red	Sacrifice of time, talent, and personal will	16
Purple	To lead the best life possible	18
White	Life of full time Christian Service to Youth	21

## I Remember

By Tom Trester

◆ From Pioneer unit camper... Explorer unit camper... LT program ... Counselor... Boy's Unit Director... Camp Minikani became my home between the mid sixties through mid seventies. Minikani lives within each of us who have been blessed to connect with people along the shores of Lake Amy Belle.

◆ "The itsy bitsy spider went up the water spout", Don Nordahl's mono-tone, resonant, singing voice echoed throughout Council Bluffs. Campers from the mid 1960's laughed in delight as they watched this larger than life man, executive camp director, sing this children's song. His eyes twinkled in the light of the closing campfire. His large fingers mimicked the legs of the spider slowly making his climb up the spout.

◆ The charisma of Lloyd LaRoque, program director, was demonstrated through his flamboyant body movements as he led the camp through an entertaining evening of song and story. The "Green Mist" and other stories became "real" in the minds of each camper and counselor .

◆ I experienced the importance of being on the "good" side of Ethel Athey (camp cook). She "ruled" the kitchen (old dining hall by the lake) with an iron skillet. Yet it was this lady (who rarely smiled), that allowed counselors to sneak into her domain after hours to pick-up food for their overnight cabin "sneakouts".

◆ Camp Minikani during the summer of 1967 became a fantasy world separated from the racial strife and rioting taking place in Milwaukee. We participated in quiet vesper moments while

Milwaukee was under a curfew with the sounds of breaking glass and gunshots.

◆ In the late sixties, I remember celebrations revolving around the 50th anniversary and heated discussions regarding the proposed building of a new dining hall and attached pool area. The years may pass by quickly, new structures may be built, programming may change, but Minikani's spirit continues to weave it's thread through our memories. 🌲

