



Summer 2012
Volume 4, Issue 3

NEWSLETTER

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Thanks To: Jan Valde

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We all remember the good times we had at Minikani. But do you remember the days and weeks before you went to camp the first time, thinking about what it would be like? Being torn between the fun activities you'd certainly enjoy at camp, yet missing the comfortable and familiar surroundings you were leaving behind at home?

Your continued financial support makes it possible for the MAC to send 7 kids to camp this summer. Here are some of the things that either the parents or the kids themselves have to say about going to camp. Since most of the kids are attending camp the last half of the summer, we'll have to wait until later to see if camp lives up to their expectations...



"I hope I get to go to Camp Minikani. It looks really fun. Some reasons I am excited to go are there is swimming and archery. I have never been to camp before. I am excited and scared to sleep in a cabin. I am excited to meet friends. I am excited to tell stories at a campfire. The only sad thing about camp is lights out at 9:15."

"He is small for his age and kids can sometimes be hurtful, but he perseveres because he is lovable and kind. He has very few positive male role models and I feel that being able to go to camp is something that could impact his life in a very positive way at this time."

"She sometimes struggles making friends at school, and having camp where no judgments are allowed would help her so much."

"Without receiving a Campership, his family would not be able to afford sending him to summer camp and giving him such a unique, incredible and beneficial experience."

(Continued next page)

2012 Camperships Continued:

“She has never really had a chance to leave the inner city of Milwaukee. By going to camp, she will learn many new skills and make new friends.”

“Every summer all I do is stay in the house with nothing to do. I always wish to do stuff outdoors, like swim and sports. I think camp would be fun. It would also keep me out of trouble.”

“He is the oldest of six children. He has a lot of responsibilities and not a lot of time for extra activities. He is a good-hearted child and loves the out of doors. Thank you very much for this great opportunity.”



What's New at Camp?

What's new at camp this summer? Lots of things, but here are just a few:

1) Like many places around the country, it has been a hot and dry this summer. Has it interfered with campers having a great time? Of course not. Here's a photo of Norris Field from the side of Robby:



beginning and experienced rock climbers in a "no ropes" format.



4) A new pier for people using canoes in Lake Amy Belle.



Pizza Party for Staff

What happens when you put 23 extra large pizzas from Dominos, 13 2-liter bottles of soda, 11 orders of breadsticks, and almost the whole summer staff at Minikani together in Robertson Lodge late at night? You get a Pizza Party! That's what happened after taps on Thursday, July 26th this year. Everyone loved the pizza and was very appreciative of the MAC for hosting. (By the way, the MAC – that's you and me!) Having been on the staff at camp at one time, we know how much a treat like pizza is for everyone who works so hard all day long for the 'kids'. We're grateful for the job they are doing this summer, and they're grateful for the tasty pizza treat.



Did You Know?
Tommy Robertson Lodge was built in 1939, three years before Pine Forest was planted. At that time, camp cost \$31.00 for a two week session.

White Ragers

There are 7 staff members who will be taking the challenge of the White Rag this summer. Ceremonies will be held on two different dates to accommodate everyone.

Friday, August 3rd Ceremony:

- Grace Edquist- Girls Unit Director
- Amanda Hendrickson- LT Director
- Sarah Whaley- Skills Director
- Catherine Kistler- Explorer Director

Monday, August 5th Ceremony:

- Michael Luckey- H₂O Director
- Jeremy Ledbetter- LT Director
- Tom Cramer- Boys Unit Director

2) Using Robertson Lodge as the Staff Lodge. Counselors love it. Walk in the front door and you will be immediately reminded of the 'ole staff lodge of the 80's. It's a good thing. (1981 Staff Lodge below)



3) The addition of a "Bouldering Wall" between the tennis courts and the Health Center. This wall (about 10 feet high) is used to practice climbing techniques, develop strength, balance, and flexibility. The vertical walls provide challenges to meet the needs of both



MAC Membership

It pretty much started at the 1st Alumni weekend at Minikani in August, 2009. A bunch of us wanted to start an alumni group that would help keep everyone connected to camp. People quickly got to work setting up a website, contacting potential members, writing a Mission Statement, filing for non-profit status and more. The "Spirit" that Minikani is famous for kept us excited for all the possibilities. But then we hit a stumbling block – "How will we finance our group?" We would certainly need money to get the group off the ground, and beyond that we could help get kids to camp, support camp's Strong Kids, and give back to camp.

One was to do this was to charge a membership fee for participation. Perhaps \$20 a year would enable members to belong to our group. Others felt that membership should be free, but people could contribute whatever amount they wanted to. That way membership and participation would be open to everyone who had ever worked at camp, and hopefully we'd have enough money to keep our community going.

After quite a few discussions, the second idea won out and has worked well so far.



We now hold a Membership Drive during the month of May and ask members to contribute what they can. This annual donation is split up four ways and helps us work toward our Mission: "To maintain a connection with our summer homeland, while also supporting traditions and current summer programming through acts of fellowship and service."

All contributing member's names are listed on our website. And while we accepted donations from 51 alumni this past May, we hope to double that number next May. Please keep this in mind next year when you asked to make a contribution. As an alumni community, we couldn't do it without you!



Silent Auction

There are two main ways we get money to sponsor kids at Minikani. One is from the May Membership Drive, where 30% of the money collected goes to Camperships. The other is during our Holiday Fundraiser in December. And a good part of the money we raise at the fundraiser comes from a successful Silent Auction.

Even if you can't attend the Holiday Fundraiser, you can still contribute to the Silent Auction. And it's really easy to do. A little thought and leg-work on your part now can bring positive results in December.

We will not turn away a donated item. Anything that you think might be of value to someone else is an appropriate item. Here's an idea: You can put the MAC on your Holiday shopping list and buy something and then donate it to us.



Reminder: No Alumni Weekend This Summer

The next Alumni Weekend will be held during the Summer of 2013.

Or you can donate a service – cooking lessons, travel guide, babysitting, car repair, etc. You can donate memorabilia – sports or otherwise. You can donate tickets to an event you may not be able to attend. You can donate new clothing, appliances, jewelry, sports equipment, cleaning supplies, artwork – the list goes on and on.

Another possibility is to get others to donate something of value. Maybe your generous employer will kick in something. Perhaps you can get a free item from your beauty salon or an oil change from your mechanic. Businesses are always looking for good publicity, and you can't get much better than our cause – to help send kids to camp. Sometimes all you have to do is ask, and you'll be surprised with their generosity.

It will help us advertise the Holiday Fundraiser if we can include a list of fabulous auction items. Nina Shully (nina.shully@gmail.com) will once again coordinate the collection of Auction items this year. Will you commit now to donate an item? Don't forget, the Minikani Alumni Community is a not for profit section 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization. That means all contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by the Internal Revenue Service.

SpotLight

On Alumni

Most of you already know Jan Valde. She started coming to Minikani in 1970 as a camper, and 42 years later she continues to spend some of her summers at camp. Some would say she's a very lucky person. But others would point out that she has **worked** her way through the 'system' and now gets to work as the camp nurse for a couple weeks a summer.

Jan was a camper, an LT, and a counselor until she graduated from college in 1983. And then she came back to camp and became the nurse. She has also worked at other camps, traveled through India, worked at Children's Hospital, worked in a school health room and presently works in a pediatrician's office. But she keeps coming back to camp.

Jan's whole family stays connected to camp. She has an understanding husband, Russ, and two kids, Rychelle and Ryan. Her kids have gone to preschool at camp, day camp and now come to resident camp. Her family has gone to the Labor Day family camp as a family for the past 10 years, and she is involved with the Board, specifically on the program committee. Her kids have gone to camp with their school groups. It seems as though there is hardly a program at camp that she or her family has missed!

When asked about a favorite memory of camp, she replied with a un-nurse-like answer: She loved going to the mud quarry (off camp)

and playing around in all the mud. What fun it was to get dirty as a kid. Another favorite memory was a lasting friendship she made with a Danish exchange counselor, Lotte. (As a coincidence, her dog shares the same name!)

Jan credits camp with helping her develop the following life skills: 1) dealing with people, 2) the core values of honesty, caring, respect and responsibility, 3) a sense of wonder and love for the natural world, and 4) the fact that she picks up litter. Really. She learned that at camp, and now continues to fight against trash wherever she goes. She even had her Girl Scout troop picking up garbage on a beach on Tybee Island in Georgia.



Jan Valde, 1984

She describes her job as camp nurse in the following way: It's never boring! I see about 100 kids a day on the average. I work a 24 hour day, 7 days a week. I sleep in the Health Center (or Infirmary as it used to be called). I wake up early, stay up late and sometimes get woken in the middle of the night. I have many "frequenters" who find an "excuse" to come and see me,



and so they just like to hang out, especially during free time.

Why does Jan keep coming back to camp? "Fond memories.... As I told the staff this summer... 'I wish the world ran the same way as camp'. Each summer that I return, I feel rejuvenated and feel like there is still hope for peace in the world. Oh, if only people treated each other like they do at camp and everyone helped each other out like they do at camp, and everyone had goals and tried new things and felt safe and the list goes on...."

Her advice for others who may want to try to re-experience camp, "I highly recommend it...it does your mental health a world of good!"

Jan loves Minikani, where she finds that special 'feeling' deep down inside.... A feeling of being cared about, accepted, and belonging.... The Minikani Spirit lives in Jan, and as she thinks back to all of her experiences at camp she summarizes them by saying "The totem poles may have changed but that spirit of fun and love continues!" Wouldn't you agree that both Minikani and Jan are lucky to have each other?



Do you have someone you would like to recommend for the "Spotlight on Alumni"? Send your suggestions to brucerass@wi.rr.com

Nature Notes

By Bruce

Over the years I've had a chance to forage around camp and gather a fairly large assortment of edible foods. I was surprised this summer when I sat down and made a list for myself. Some of these foods were shared with Nature Skill classes, and others were simply enjoyed. As you might expect, there is a certain amount of skill that goes into finding, identifying, and preparing wild foods. Some items are easy to recognize (raspberries, day lilies, roses, etc.) while others carefully mimic a deadly look-a-like so closely that it makes gathering for the amateur justifiably impossible.

If you're interested, I would recommend Stalking the Wild Asparagus by Euell Gibbons. The author includes interesting stories along with recipes for the foods you gather. Finally, I would never gather any plant at camp that would be missed – Pick some berries, yes. Destroy whole plants, no. I respect the nature at camp too much to destroy it.

Meat: Camp is recognized as a Wildlife Preserve, so there is no hunting. But I have tasted fried fish that was caught in Mud Lake (Thanks to Bob Acker).

Mushrooms: A giant puffball mushroom collected from Heiniker Hill after a rainy week at camp was delicious when it was sautéed with onions and peppers.

Tea: Catnip and mint leaves collected from various places around camp. (I also had wonderful wintergreen tea up north with LT trips.)

Punch: Some call it a punch, others a tea, but the beverage made from the hard sumac berries was very popular with Nature classes. Just make sure you add enough sugar!

Berries: Black raspberries grow all around camp, behind archery and Heiniker Hill to name a few. Mulberries grew on a dwarf tree right outside Fireside Lodge for many years, and a large mulberry tree along the tennis courts produced tasty white fruits.

Flowers: Elderberry flowers mixed into pancake batter made the cakes light and fluffy for Nature classes. Daylily flowers, the large orange flower that grows around Fireside Lodge, give a 'smoky' taste to salads. I once collected a quart of violet flowers and used them to make a delicate Violet Flower Jelly. (Yes, it took over a day to collect enough flowers!)



Salad: A Nature hike along camp would yield tender dandelion leaves, plantain, wood sorrel (rabbit clover) and lambs quarters. Mixing the greens with iceberg lettuce and lots of red dressing from the kitchen made the salad enjoyable.

Jelly: My mother showed me how to make jelly using the crab apples from the tree outside the Health Center. My favorite jelly is May

Apple Marmalade, made from the yellow-ripe fruit of the small umbrella-like plant that grows in the AC Woods, Pioneer Unit and beyond. (Note: The fruits are poisonous until fully ripe in the early fall, but well worth the wait.) I've also made jelly or jam from black raspberries, elderberries, wild grapes, high bush cranberries and chokecherries, all of which can be found at camp.

Vegetable: The tender shoots of the cat tail, once the long green leaves are removed, tastes kind of like a cucumber. Tender milkweed leaves, stems, and flower buds all make a decent vegetable, as long as they are boiled in water to remove the bitter white 'milk' juice. Wild onions grow on the east side of Explorer Hill, small in size but large in taste. And of course, wild asparagus is simply 'tame' asparagus that is growing wild. It's delicious.

Candy: I tried to follow a recipe for Burdock Candy, made from the root of the burdock (burr) plant, which camp has plenty of. It took a couple of hours to collect and process, and the result was inedible and not worth the effort ☹️.

Misc.: Many Nature students have chewed on a wild grape vine tendril for its sour taste. The wild ginger that grows at Sleep Hollow gives off a refreshing, clean ginger flavor. The pink wild rose petals that grow around Norris Field can be added to a salad for a 'perfume' taste, and the red-ripe fruits of the rose plant, called rose hips, have little flavor but lots of vitamin C. Be sure to remove the hairy seeds before eating.

