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# NEWSLETTER

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Thanks To: Jenny Risch, Matt Sullivan, Joe Rooney, Sallie Willett Shea, Calie Joy Herbst, and Perry LaRoque  
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Minikani Alumni Community proudly presents its 2013

## MAC Gala

Saturday, December 21, 2013

Featuring - Food, Music, & Spirit

The Fifth Annual Minikani Alumni Community Gala is upon us! Join us on December 21st as we return to the beautiful Charles Allis Museum to celebrate our first five years and toast to the next!

The evening will include live music with Minikani Alumni Myles Hayes, Grace Weber and a five piece band! Enjoy cocktails, passed appetizers compliments of Shully's Catering along with the chance to bid on exciting new auction items!



Mark your calendars – or better yet purchase your tickets now. Early Bird tickets will only be available until November 15<sup>th</sup>, with no tickets sold at the door. To purchase tickets or to make a donation go to

[WWW.MACGALA.EVENTBRITE.COM](http://WWW.MACGALA.EVENTBRITE.COM)

Family and friends of Minikani Alumni are encouraged to join us!



## Minikani Up-Date

By Matt Sullivan

### Summer 2013 wrap up-

This past summer was an amazing summer that truly captured the meaning of the Spirit of Minikani. I can't express how amazing the staff were this summer and the great things they did for all the campers!! We truly maximized every ounce of Minikani Spirit within the staff, which in turn spread to all of the campers. This summer we saw a 15% increase within all camp Summer programs and saw a 63% camper retention rate for overnight camp!! Our overnight camper retention rate is up from 57% in 2010 and we are now seeing next summer's sessions fill from our early registrations. We also ran into some new problems like running out of chairs in the dining hall and space for cars in Norris Field. Thinking on our feet we fixed the issues with ad staff benches and filled the upper parking lot with the over flowing cars. We also had more kids in the units than we have ever seen before, which posed new challenges in the Units and within skills. The Ad staff did a great job working together making sure counselors and campers were equipped to create and experience Minikani magic!!!

### On a personal Note –

It has been great watching the numbers grow and seeing more and more campers come to Minikani. As many of you know this past summer was my last as Summer Camp Director. It has been a wonderful 15 years growing from camper, LT, Counselor, WSA skill head, Explorer Director, Assistant Summer Camp Director to Summer

Camp Director for the past 3 years. So many of you influenced and guided me along my camp path that is now taking me to Colorado, where I'll be working at YMCA Camp Chief Ouray. I wanted to thank the Alumni for all the influence you have given me and the 1,000's of kids that have come through Minikani. The future of Minikani is very bright and could not be led by anyone better than Jen Feltz. It will be exciting times at camp, and I now have the privilege of joining the ranks of the Minikani Alumni Community that does so much for Mama Minikani.

In the spirit,

Matt "Sully" Sullivan



## YMCA Camp Minikani

### Our Values

- ◆ Be an inclusive community
- ◆ Celebrate creativity and diversity
- ◆ Strengthen a connection with nature
- ◆ Cultivate growth, welcome change
- ◆ Pass the torch of tradition with humility
- ◆ Live with passion and integrity

### Our Vision

We are a family – a family of supportive, creative individuals embracing diversity and providing the tools to navigate growth. Through an emphasis on self-awareness, the Spirit of Minikani inspires people to be their best selves and a positive influence within their communities.

## MAC Up-Date

By Bruce Rasmussen

The Minikani Alumni Community has been very busy this past year. Here is a quick summary for you:

- 1) We published 4 Newsletters – October, January, May and Summer and sent out 29 MailChimp emails to our 364 members.
- 2) With the generosity of our members, we donated over \$900 to Minikani's Annual Campaign on 10/28/12.
- 3) Our successful Winter Holiday Fundraiser at Potawatomi casino raised almost \$4,000 for our Campership Fund.
- 4) "Dinner Around the World" in March had alumni getting together at 18 sites – around the world.
- 5) The Spring Workday had 27 people come out to camp and work on all kinds of projects.
- 6) During our "May Membership Month" 64 alumni donated from \$15 to \$1,500 each.
- 7) A dozen alumni volunteered during Staff Training Week to share their thoughts and memories with open discussion groups.
- 8) For \$300 we hosted a Minikani Summer Staff '13 Pizza Party
- 9) We sent 7 one-week, two-week, and explorer campers to camp.
- 10) We organized the biannual "Alumni Weekend" at Minikani in August for over 100 people.



# Day Camp History

By Joe Rooney

The summer of 2007 brought about large changes to the operation of camp. The decision was made to staff Day Camp and MiniKamp with Minikani staff from the O/LT programs. Previously, the staff was composed of international counselors and outside hires. There was work to be done to help merge a program that came over from recently closed Triangle Y.

Michael Smith was asked to take on this important task. Having many years of Minikani experience under his belt, he began with restructuring. Smith began hiring staff members, pulling many from the O/LT3 group of the previous summer. The remainder of the staff was composed of international counselors and some outside hires. Having staff used to the traditional structure of a Minikani day, the restructuring of the program became slightly easier for Mike. Filled with unit days and

structured cabin activities, the summer was like nothing the Day Camp program had ever seen before.

It was the first summer that Day Camp (DC) began to look like a Minikani program that had been there for years. It was starting to look like “a magnificent and sparkling diamond,” said Smith proudly. He continued, “Really it was infusing the talent from within camp and not relying on outsiders to run it. That, and a lot of parental hand shaking.”

One of the main challenges of that first summer was the lack of a permanent “home” to hold the DC. For the entire first summer, the “home” of the DC was in a giant tent next to Norris field. This was often uncomfortable, as it would get extremely muddy and slippery with the rain. With the next summer, came new unit directors and the Halquist Lodge. Directors Brian Siegel and Heather Neuwirth made the Great Room of the lodge the program’s new home. There were



Even through this second summer, most of the counselors were coming to camp with the kids in the morning and then going home at the end of every day. The only night counselors spent at camp during the week was for the DC sleepover. The hiring of another year of Minikani-trained counselors, and the one night a week spent with the overnight staff, helped staff create a stronger understanding of the DC programming by all summer staff members. The DC staff and program started to become less of an additional program and more of a Minikani program.

With the DC coming into its own, it has allowed Minikani as a whole to restructure things. The summer staff members are now hired as a summer counselor. There is no more divide between day and resident camp. Beginning with the O/LT3s in 2008, each 3 spends time in day camp and resident camp. The allowed all first year counselors to begin the transition between Day Camp, resident camp, and MiniKamp the following summer. This “one staff” mentality is now engrained in the



The second summer of DC, when we first got the Halquist Lodge.



The first summer of Minikani-trained DC counselors.

It was a brief rest period every Thursday in Pine Forest. These gave the campers and staff some much needed rest after the previous night's sleepover.

With an energetic and tireless staff, the DC program was a major success this summer. The program had completely full enrollment throughout the summer. The counselors and staff members rallied behind their new group symbols and "made amazing memories for campers and carried on Minikani's tradition of excellence." The directors coordinated with the kitchen, maintenance, and year-round staff to ensure the summer ran as smoothly as possible.



Siesta in Pine Forest

Minikani's Day Camp has come a long way in the 7 summers since its revitalization. Every summer there are campers being fed into the resident camp, explorer, equestrian, and O/LT programs. We are also beginning to see once day campers becoming O/LT3's and counselors. There is no where to go but up for the program. Every single counselor at camp now has had experience with the DC program, much different than the handful of Minikani-trained counselors that first summer. With the passion of the counselors and directors, it has become a strong program at Minikani and continues to change the lives of children every day.



counseling experience. It has very much helped staff, and in turn campers, get the most out of their summers at Minikani.

"We took our Minikani spirit and we poured it into Day Camp. Until us, it had been staffed by "outsiders", non-[O/]LT's, people that I thought didn't get it. I like to think we were successful our goal; that we transformed Day Camp. That we proved to everyone, including myself, that Day Campers had the Minikani spirit...that we could make a difference in kid's lives despite that still went home to their parents each night. I felt like everything was validated when we heard that the next summer, [O/]LT's would be hired back as "counselors"; no qualifications needed, everyone embodied the Minikani spirit," says Steve Damico, one of the original DC counselors.

New traditions are being born every year in the DC. This summer marked the 7<sup>th</sup> consecutive summer of Day Camp dodge ball. Similar to the resident camp Pine Forest dodge ball, the DC groups meet on a

regular basis for a dodge ball battle. This summer, for the first time, the DC created official group signs. Ryan Wnuk and Rachel Whaley were the directors this summer, and were very excited to share about the traditions started this summer.

"We looked for ways that would equate the programming of Day Camp to that of Minikani's Resident Camp. For example, the Resident Camp cabins each have a recognizable name and symbol that campers and counselors can attach to and rally behind. Prior to the beginning of the summer, we created new symbols of a celestial theme that will likely be passed down for generations of summers to come. We carved and painted new signs that now decorate the walls of Halquist Lodge, and mark where each group will meet throughout the day. To keep these symbols simple and memorable, the names of each group start with the same letter as the group letter to which campers are assigned (Apollo, Beta, Cosmos, Draco, Eclipse, Fusion, Gaia, Helios, Intra)."

Another tradition was the DC Siesta.



# SpotLight On Alumni

## Sallie Willett Shea

◆ **What is your history at camp?**  
My mother attended overnight camp growing up (not Minikani) & wanted her own kids to have the same experience. We didn't know about Minikani so I ended up attending a horseback riding camp at & a couple summers of Girl Scout Camp. The camps were ok, but there were a lot of homesick kids (including me) so I was not thrilled about attending camp again. A friend told me she was going to Minikani & it was a lot of fun. I decided to go for it and at the age of 12 or 13 I went to Sailing Camp at Minikani. It was one of the best times of my life & that is when my love of Minikani began. The next summer was Explorer Camp & then 3 years as an LT. I also spent 2 years as a Counselor & my last year as an Explorer Counselor. I was there from 1986-1992.

◆ **Any particularly 'fond' memories of camp?** There are too many fond memories to list, so I'll just talk about one: On either the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> year at Minikani, I decided to go without a friend. Keep in mind that back then, most of the campers were from the North Shore. I came from the Western burbs & I didn't know a single soul. That first day & night were rough because all the girls in my unit knew each other & I started to feel very alone. There was a friendly girl in my cabin who seemed to know everyone & she decided to take me under her wing.

She is my best friend to this day (Jennifer Peterson Hogervorst) ☺

◆ **Any particularly 'unpleasant' memories of camp?** The only unpleasant memory had to be working on the waterfront on really cold mornings. I mostly taught diving which had been in the pool. But, there was a new code that required the pool to be at a certain depth for diving which it wasn't, so diving was moved to the lake. I remember freezing my butt off & looking at all the campers with their purple lips & finger nails & knowing that this was not the time to whine, but to lead. So, I sucked it up & pretended that those extra cold mornings were "super fun!" I could have won an Academy Award for that acting job. Let's just admit that being part of the waterfront staff can be pretty brutal on freezing cold days.



◆ **Were there any special skills you learned while at camp?**  
The greatest skill Minkiani gave me was a sense of independence & adventure (amongst many other things). This led me to have the 2<sup>nd</sup> best experience of my life (Minikani being my first) which was backpacking through Europe after college. I don't think I would have done that, much less thrived, in such an experience.

◆ **How did you make the transition from camp to the "real" world?** One of the greatest aspects of Minikani is how well it prepares you for the real world. It teaches you to be kind, to appreciate & respect nature, independence, adventure, leadership skills, communication skills, the

importance of a positive attitude, gratitude, sharing, the importance of volunteering & giving back to your community. Should I go on? ;)



◆ **What are you doing now?**  
I graduated from UWM in 1996 with a Bachelors Degree in Womens Studies & Sociology. I really wanted to go into some type of public service, but was having a difficult time finding something that allowed me to make a living. At that time, I was temping for a Printing Company & was asked to stay, given a promotion, & a decent salary (not much looking back on it, but it seemed like a lot for a recent college grad!). So, I found myself working in the printing industry for the next 7 or 8 years. Around that time, I decided to finally follow my dream of public service & applied to Nursing School at UWM.



About halfway through the program I became very ill & found out that I had a rare & incurable lung disease called Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis-Usual Interstitial Pneumonitis (IPF-UIP). I was end-stage & the only way to save my life was to have a double lung transplant. I continued to go to school & work as a Nurse Intern until I was put on oxygen 24/7. Over the next 3 ½ years I became sicker & sicker until I finally received a call for a transplant in 2008. Hallelujah!

"Don't take your organs to Heaven... Heaven knows we need them here."

It took over a year of recovery before I was able to go back to school to finish my nursing degree. In 2011, I became an RN/BSN. After I was diagnosed with IPF-UIP, I decided to become an advocate for pulmonary fibrosis & organ donation.



Over the years I've given numerous speeches, done some commercials & videos, behind the scenes things – stuffing envelopes, making phone calls, etc. My family also started a charitable organization called **The Willett Foundation** which provided money to help with medical

expenses for those with IPF & waiting for transplants. We were able to help a few people which was extremely rewarding. Unfortunately, one of those people has died & two are in chronic rejection. Lungs are tricky organs to transplant & it only reinforces the need for more research into IPF so that we can prevent this disease before a transplant is needed. For more information on how you can help, go to [www.pulmonaryfibrosis.org](http://www.pulmonaryfibrosis.org).

◆ **Do you think camp has had any influence in your present success?**

Absolutely. I think what has helped me the most is a sense of balance. Camp taught me that there are more important things in life than money & superficiality. So, I don't view success as having a lot of money, driving a nice car, living in a big house, etc. I view success as having a good marriage, having relationships with friends & family, maintaining a positive attitude, gratitude, & being able to live in the moment.

◆ **What does Camp Minikani mean to you?**

I live a better life because of my experiences at Camp Minikani. It really teaches you the mind, body, spirit aspect of living your life. I think the raggers' creed says it all .

◆ **Do you have anything else you'd like to share with other Minikani alumni?**

Currently, there are approximately 100,000 people on the national organ transplant list. Around 3,700 transplant candidates are added to the list each month. About 77 people receive an organ transplant & 18 die every day while waiting for an organ transplant. You can help as

many as 50 people by becoming an organ and tissue donor. Please consider becoming an organ donor if you haven't already. For more info on how to register as an organ donor, go to:

<http://www.organdonor.gov/donor/index.htm>

or

[www.unos.org](http://www.unos.org)

It is really easy to do and it saves lives.



**RAGGERS' CREED**

I would be true,  
for there are those who trust me;

I would be pure,  
for there are those who care;

I would be strong,  
for there is much to suffer;

I would be brave,  
for there is much to dare;

I would be friend to all,  
the foe, the friendless;

I would be giving,  
and forget the gift;

I would be humble,  
for I know my weakness;

I would look up,  
and laugh and love and lift.



## Happy Camper

By Calie Joy Herbst

Our campership little man, Mario, was an Explorer this year! When he started going to camp a few years ago, he was terrified of the water and refused to get in a boat. This year he canoed for ten hours, tipped three times and had fun while doing it, climbed the rock wall, and cried on the last night with his cabin mates who he called his "family." Camp truly, truly changes lives, and we are so thankful to the Alumni Community for making this possible for Mario.



## Nature Notes

By Bruce

### Ironwood Trees

“Ironwood” is a common name for a large number of woods that have a reputation for hardness. Wikipedia lists 30 trees around the world that have this same common name. At Minikani, just east of Explorer Hill, we have ideal conditions for the native ironwood species to grow, *Ostrya virginiana* or the American Hop-hornbeam. (*Ostrya* is Greek for ‘hard wood’.) This tree is native to most counties in Wisconsin. Its wood is very resilient and has always been valued for making tool handles, fence posts, rake teeth, axles, spokes, mallets, sled runners, ox yokes, wheel rims and levers. Native Americans of this region commonly made their bows of ironwood.

## MAC Board Members and Their Roles 2013-14

The following people have volunteered to serve the Minikani Alumni Community with their time and talents:

- Director: Mike Auda (michaelauda@gmail.com)
- Holiday Ball: Jenny Risch (jennyrisch@gmail.com)
- Work Projects: Brian Siegel (blsiegel@gmail.com)
- Treasurer: Bruce Rasmussen (brucerass@wi.rr.com)
- Board Liaisons: Julie Hoesly (jhoesly@wi.rr.com),  
Michael Whitcomb (mjwhitcomb@gmail.com)
- Staff Relations: Nina Darling (nina.c.darling@gmail.com)
- Recruitment: Casey Cox (caseyj.cox@gmail.com)
- Historian: Hillary Lobenstein (hillary.lobenstein@gmail.com)
- Camperships: John Hyland (johnnyhyland@gmail.com)
- Note Taker: Julie Hoesly (jhoesly@wi.rr.com)

The Ironwood tree is relatively small, growing to a height of about 30 feet, making it an ‘understory’ tree that seldom reaches the canopy of the forest. But it doesn’t mind growing in an upland forest and enjoying the shade of its maple, beech, cherry and ash neighbors, as long as the soil doesn’t permanently hold water. Johnson Nursery in Menomonee Falls ranks it among the top ten best trees for Wisconsin landscapes.

The ‘fruits’ of ironwoods are already mature by late summer and closely resemble those of the hop vine, the plant that helped make Milwaukee so famous in regards to the beer industry. Seeds of the



ironwood are contained in small, light tan, flat, pointed, somewhat inflated containers resembling tiny dangling clusters of papery bags.

Many birds and other wildlife are attracted to the seeds in the fall. Finally, it is common for the trees to hold some of the dead leaves on the branches throughout winter, making it easy to spot the Ironwood as you hike Minikani’s trails in the winter.



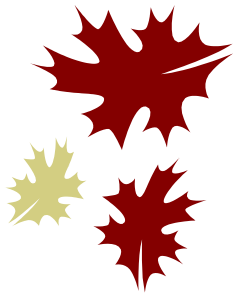
Nicknamed the “Kissing Trees” by campers and found along the trail to Sleepy Hollow, these two ironwoods seem to be joined at the trunk!



# Thoughts

By Perry LaRoque

It's often that I wish I could wake up to the sound of a bugle, knowing that only ten minutes remain until I need to run from Ramblin' X to secure a shower with a water-reducing showerhead. Starting the day with my best friends, laughing about whatever happened the night before, and what might transpire



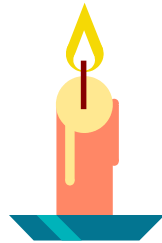
over the next day. Rousing a group of tired soldiers, eager for new adventures contained within my fingertips.

Walking in the crisp air, with the scent of late night shortcuts behind cabins and the indescribable smell of oak leaves and dew covered gravel roads. Entering the dining hall, filling the chalice that had gained meaning from the effort of standing out and longevity and expressions of simple individuality. Seeing everyone I missed for the past six hours gathering in the same place, smiling at my crush, inside jokes. Singing grace.

Foreshadowing. Pacing my time perfectly to the temple on the lake to hear the simple thoughts, the most important thoughts, the passwords for life. Walking to skills and noticing the warmth of the lake rising above cool of the forest. Noticing presence. Meeting after lunch, hoping it will take longer to spend more time being together. Shuffling my feet to add to generations of division between the odds and the evens, under the monuments of time past. The satisfaction of being tagged by the slowest and most persistent.

Cherishing the opportunity to give confidence, give belonging, give freedom. Being stupid. Running for the bugle, to run for the bugle. Waiting for the bell to show pride, to sing in unison, and then get to the lodge and be myself with those who I am trying to be. Putting on a shirt with buttons and adorning my outward sign to remember that nobility obligates. Putting a match in my mouth, seeing a line of eyes ready for magic, walking silently together behind an endless flame. How 'bout that fire. Seeing eyes glittering with totems, optimism, content, safety. Praying to the lake, and the hills, and the sky.

Slowly walking in the quiet aftermath of energy with the sun casting orange shadows on the sky, with the first twinkling stars just above the mist rising to meet the twilight. Listening to the anthem of



taps. Lighting a match to see eyes peering out toward my opportunity to inspire. Blowing out the flame to tired sighs and whispers.

Meeting my comrades, true and ever faithful, with stories of inspiration told in their eyes. Knowing that giving will always hold more than the gift. Entering our communal gathering space, with desires to laugh, and to love, and to lift. Laughing. Ending the day with untold stories, epic legends, and the comfort that tomorrow it will all be there for us again. Cherishing today. Anticipating tomorrow. Wanting it to slow down. Hoping it will never end.

Then I want to wake up next to the woman who shared all of this with me, who knows what only a few

have had the opportunity to know. Serving the result of my commitment to the White Rag. Hearing from friends who all want it back as much as I do. Spending time reminiscing, recreating, adding to what we started. Seeing my nieces and nephews wearing square knots, talking of magic, and simply smiling to explain what we all know can't be explained. Hoping that I could do it again, but knowing that the past and the future, inextricably linked, will always be pure because I had the opportunity to notice the warmth rising from water.



## Bob Aker Donations

Probably everyone in the Alumni Community has heard by now of Bob's diagnosis with ALS a year ago. Many of you have contributed money to help out his family – a wife Chris and 3 children. We have collected over \$2,000 to help them through these tough times. During his many years at Minikani as a camper, LT, counselor and WF Director, Bob developed a reputation – to never give up. He continues this positive attitude today. If you'd like, you can still make a donation of any amount through the MAC. For more information and to see a video of Bob, go to our website at [www.minikanistafflodge.com](http://www.minikanistafflodge.com).

