



MINIKANI ALUMNI COMMUNITY
I'm comin' home to you...

Summer 2014
Volume 6, Issue 3

NEWSLETTER

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Thanks To: Jen Feltz, Tom Cramer, Dean Kaplan

Bruce Rasmussen, Editor
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From the Editor,

Recently I attended the "Friends of Minikani" Dinner, which was held this year on July 23rd. Because I needed to up-date the Fireside Society plaque that list the \$1,000 and above contributors to our Community, I got to camp early.

As I walked from the back parking lot to Fireside, I could see that camp was in full swing – Explorers were having some kind of special day on Norris Field, cabin groups were going about their Cabin Acts business, and the Waterfront was in full swing.

Unfortunately Fireside Lodge was busy, so I did what I often do whenever I get a chance; I took the trail behind the Nature Lodge to visit Mud Lake.

It was there that I accidentally stumbled upon a group from Cabin 10 that was in the middle of an 'exploration'. Their activity seemed secretive and very hush-hush as they went about trying to explore camp's 'legends' and Mud Lake was one. I tried not to interrupt their discoveries, except to take their picture.

Later, at the Friends Dinner, I chatted with alumni, staff, parents of campers, camp supporters and



old friends, but I couldn't get the cabin group I had seen earlier out of my mind. Although I wasn't exactly sure what they were doing, I realized that they were doing **camp!** That's what being at camp is all about: being part of a cabin group, learning new skills, and having fun. When it comes right down to it, camp is a place where kids can be kids, and there's no better place for that than Minikani.

We are so lucky to have had that camp experience – as a kid, and then as a counselor. Now, as alumni, we get to do our share and help others have that experience. What we do as a Community is so very important. Thanks for being a member and keeping our wonderful camp traditions alive at Minikani.



A Letter

From Jen Feltz

Dear Alumni,

You may have heard that the YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee, Camp Minikani's parent organization, recently announced a [restructuring plan](#). This plan provides what the Milwaukee Y believes is the most sustainable, viable path forward to keeping a strong Y in Milwaukee and focusing its efforts within (or very close to) the city of Milwaukee. The Y will continue to run Camp Minikani, the Rite Hite Y, Downtown Y, Parklawn Y and John C. Cudahy Y while selling the majority of its other centers (West Suburban, Southwest, Tri-County, Feith Family Ozaukee) to other Y's who are better positioned to run those centers effectively. In addition, they will look for new operating partners for YMCA Camp Matawa and the South Shore Y.

Part of this restructuring plan included voluntarily filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. The Y hopes this will allow for an orderly, thoughtful process to finalize and implement the restructuring plan. It is "business as usual" at our centers and camps while we work through the Chapter 11 process.



So what does this mean for Minikani? First and foremost, this has in no way effected camper's experience this summer. All overnight and day camps at Camp Minikani have moved forward as scheduled and planned. There will be no changes in our seasonal or year round staff and all the good work that you have known us to do, will continue!



One item that has been put on hold at this time is the fundraising for our "Minikani 100 project" that many of you are familiar with. We are continuing to plan carefully for the future and do anticipate making a significant investment into program quality improvements in the near future. However, some of the big ticket items, such as expansion of the dining hall, movement of parking areas, replacement of Kybo's will be addressed as the climate within the Y brightens moving forward.

On a positive note it has truly been an amazing 95th summer at Minikani with camp as full as anyone can remember! Our day and mini-camp programs filled in March and April, overnight and Explorer weeks filled almost every week of the summer and there has been a LINE for Summer 2015 registrations at checkout!

The sense of urgency to register is absolutely driven by the desire to be a part of the Minikani Spirit. So for you alumni who wonder if we still have that special magic, it is thriving! In Session 3A alone we will serve 430 campers through all

of our mini-camp, day camp, overnight, Equestrian and Explorer programs.

If you haven't had a chance to visit camp recently, I hope you will reach out to us and stop by soon! If you live farther away, I hope you are connected via Facebook and we always welcome your phone calls or emails. Enjoy the rest of your summer!

In the Spirit,

Jen Feltz
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MAC Board

New Officers and Roles

The Minikani Alumni Community Board of Directors recently went through a change of members, as is required by our Article of Incorporation. Below is a list of your present officers. You can contact them through our email address, minikanistafflodge@gmail.com

- President - Jenny Risch
- Treasurer and Editor of the Newsletter - Bruce Rasmussen
- Recruitment - Brian Siegel
- Julie Hoesly - Meeting Minutes and Camp Minikani Board Liaison
- Amy Owen - Camperships
- John Hyland - Alumni Reunion
- Casey Cox - Work Projects
- Amanda Hendrickson - Current Staff Liaison
- Hillary Lobenstein - Historian



Tom Cramer

By Bruce

On a beautiful summer morning in July I went to camp to give a ‘guest’ Password. It was great to stand at Council Bluff and share some of camp’s history with the staff and campers. Appropriately enough the Password for the day was “Change”.

Afterwards I got a chance to chat with Tom Cramer, the Summer Program Director. It’s his 15th summer at Minikani, but his 1st as Director. When asked what surprised him about his new job, he spoke very highly of the other Ad staff and how the ‘team’ does so much to work together and make the camp run smoothly.

Building on the day’s Password, I asked him what he would like to ‘change’ about camp. He mentioned the obvious things – a larger Dining Hall, more space for the staff, etc, but also said that he would like to see a more diverse population of kids enjoying Minikani. He is grateful for the Campership Fund that the Alumni has that helps get kids to camp, but the need is still great.

I asked him what the worst thing about being the Director was. He quickly replied, “Having to deal with all the Lost and Found.” There seems to be no end of it, and it never totally goes away. “You just have to keep working at finding the owners” he said.

It wasn’t easy for the diplomat in Tom, but I finally got him to name some names with this question: “Who among the alumni have helped you develop your skills at

camp?” Although all of Tom's counselors were integral in his experience, he admitted that there have been a few that he's been drawing upon for this particular role. Kevin (Fathead) Wright was Tom’s very first counselor, and they both grew over the years into similar leadership roles. Mike Herman, his 1st Explorer counselor, was a fantastic listener, and always made his campers feel cared about. Looking back, Mike helped Tom see the ‘power’ that camp has when kids are matched with great counselors. John Hyland, as LT Director, helped Tom mature and grow into a leadership role. Finally, Matt (Sully) Sullivan mentored Tom and showed him how to successfully follow in his footsteps.



“I’m amazed and humbled to be the Summer Program Director” said Tom. He added how grateful he was for all the support camp gets from the Alumni Community. After talking with Tom, I couldn’t help but be reminded of the Password that day. It’s clear to me that Minikani doesn’t deserve all the credit for Tom’s growth over the last 15 summers, but we can all be very proud and happy that he has ‘changed’ from being that first year camper into a very qualified and impressive camp director.



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. (This schedule was updated on 7/24/14.)

Sunday, August 3rd Ceremony:

Kevin Jennings – Day Camp Director

Chris McArdle –Alumni
Maggie Shanahan – Wrangler
Peter Drews – OLT Director

Friday, August 8th Ceremony:

Leah Harari – LT Director
Carly Shanley – Explorer Director
Michael Kushner – Explorer Director

There will also be a Staff Purple Rag on Friday, August 1st.

For more information about the Rag Ceremonies contact Tom Cramer at (262) 251-9080 or tcramer@ymcamke.org.



MAC Schedule

August 16, 2014 – Help take down camp at the end of the summer. 9:00 a.m.

December, 2014. Holiday Fundraiser for our Campership Fund. More info to follow

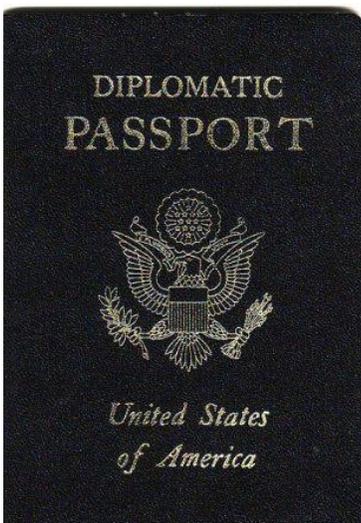
March 7, 2015 – Dinner Around the World. Locations T.B.A.

August 22 & 23, 2015 – Alumni Weekend at Camp Minikani

SpotLight On Alumni

Dean Kaplan, like many of us, started coming to Minikani when he was 9 or 10. His school counselor, Lloyd, suggested that he try camp, along with his friend Chuck Huber, so they signed up together. The next 12 years Dean was a camper, an explorer, an LT, a counselor, and the wrangler for a couple of years.

His transition to the ‘real world after camp wasn’t easy, he admits – but it probably had more to do with his own maturity level than camp, he jokes. ”I spent a lot of time unsure what I might want to do for work, and so I kept coming back to camp for a couple of years to work in the off season (thanks to the generosity of Teggy). That along with harvesting Christmas trees in Wisconsin, working as a technical writer for Siemens in East Tennessee and a couple of stints on a kibbutz in Israel.” For Dean there was a lot of wandering.



Finally in 1997 he decided that he wanted to work in foreign affairs, so he joined The George Washington University in Washington DC to complete a Masters in Security Policy Studies, mostly terrorism. “It was there that I met this girl, and although I hadn’t considered the Foreign Service, she mentioned she was taking the test and I was looking for things to talk with her about. So I took the test, married the girl and joined the Foreign Service working for the State Department.”



His job took him around the world: he has served in Abuja, Nigeria (2000-2002), Kathmandu, Nepal (2003-2007), Jerusalem (2007-2010), with a couple of jobs in the Department in Washington (War Crimes Issues and Visa Issues). In August he and his family will head off to Madrid, Spain for three years. “It’s been great - I learned Nepalese (mostly forgotten at this point), Hebrew and now Spanish.”

“I feel like I have been pretty successful in this career so far and ALL of the credit goes to skills I learned at camp. For example, the Foreign Service has leadership training at three different levels (I have taken all three) and each has been a not-quite-as-good reminder of everything we did at LT weekends. The interpersonal and leadership skills I gained at camp continue to serve me every day, as an employee, as a parent, etc.”

“Camp was the most positive formative thing in my life – without question.”

Does Dean ever miss camp or think about his time there? “Yes, I regularly think of camp. I miss the waterfront in the morning and sitting with my friends at the campfires.”

But now he has his job and his family. “I am married (Crystal) with two great kids, Aliya (11) and



Isaac (9). They have lived outside the US as much as inside. We have a dog and two cats and presently live outside of DC. But as of August 15, 2014, we’ll be living in Madrid, Spain for three years while I work at the U.S. Embassy there.”

Finally, Dean extends this invitation: “If you are ever coming through Madrid, let me know.” *(Editor’s note: Maybe Dean will host a “Dinner Around the World” next March 7th in Madrid!)*



Nature Notes

By Bruce

Glaciers

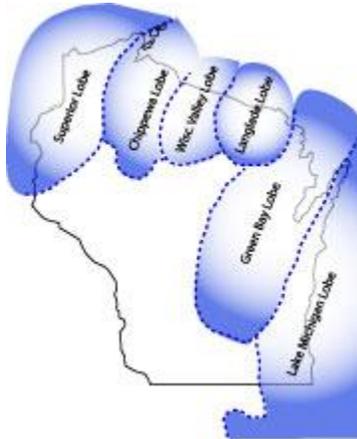
Do you think we had a cold winter/spring this year? Well, you should have been here about 25,000 years ago when Wisconsin was experiencing its last 'Ice Age'. Actually, our last Ice Age started 2.5 million years ago and lasted up until just about 10,000 years ago. But 25,000 years ago Minikani was probably covered by a sheet of ice that was thousands of feet high, as was most of the Northern North America. (One notable exception was southwestern Wisconsin; known as the 'Driftless Area'.)



Here's what scientists think happened: As the climate got cooler and cooler, the snow that fell in Canada never had a chance to melt. Over many, many years it piled up higher and higher and formed into ice, which we call a glacier. As new snow fell, it added more weight to the glacier, which compacted the snow into more and more ice.

Now imagine this chunk of ice a few miles thick, with all the weight of that frozen water pushing down on the ground because of gravity. The ice in Canada itself didn't move, but the weight of it caused

'fingers' or lobes of frozen material to 'squish' out from all the weight. Imagine using your hand to push down on a ball of modeling clay – at the bottom the softer clay would be pushed out into these 'fingers' or lobes.



Well, one of the five Wisconsin lobes (the Green Bay Lobe) slowly but surely made its way south just past Minikani to an area called the Kettle Moraine. As it moved from Canada, it picked up materials – soil, rocks, debris etc. – that stuck to the ice, just as leaves will stick to a rolling ball of snow when you're making a snowman. Only some of these rocks were the size of houses – slowly but easily pushed along at an incredibly slow rate. The pushing also caused a scraping of the local softer rocks and a gouging of the land, which formed our terrain.

After millions of years, when the climate once again began to warm up here in Wisconsin, the tip of the glacier lobe started to melt. But it was still cold and snowing in Canada, so the ice and debris was still being 'squished' out from the massive weight of the ice, and material was still being pushed south. When it finally met the melting edge, large piles of these materials were 'dropped' by the

melting glacier, forming our moraines and drumlins.

Remember the trail between Explorer Hill and Indian Hill? On either side the land drops off dramatically. Lake Amy Belle was probably scooped out, along with Mud Lake and nearby Bark Lake. When the glacier started to melt, chances are that it created one large lake out of the three. Holy Hill (actually a kame) was formed when melting water found a weak spot in the ice and swirled down a hole, carrying loads of debris and rocks that piled up to form the conical hill, the tallest point in Washington County, but still only a 'molehill' compared to the height of the glacier that once was over a mile high.

In a way, we can thank the last Ice Age for giving Minikani and the surrounding area its diversity of terrain (the rolling hillsides), its assortment of different kinds of rocks and glacial till, and of course the lakes we enjoy so much.



Why are these Alumni smiling so much? It's probably because they are at the Staff Training Dinner held last June. They got a chance to visit with the summer staff, lead discussions, answer questions, and reminisce about their days at Minikani.



9 Ways to be a Better Alumnus

It seems like all the magazines and newsletters are publishing articles with lists in them to attract readers, so here goes – **9 Ways to be a Better Alumnus:**

1. Do Something Campy. The MAC offers lots of opportunities for you to return to Minikani and help out in one way or another – or to just show up and enjoy yourself. Work days, Staff Training, Alumni Weekend, dinners, etc are all possibilities. If you don't live close to camp, there's always the Dinner Around the World in March ¹ and 'campy' things to do at a camp close to you.

2. Open and Read your Email. In this day and age, almost all of our communications come to you via minikanistafflodge@gmail.com. We know you're busy, but just take a moment to see what's going on with the MAC. It might be some information, an invitation, a request, or a Newsletter. The email service we use says that Non-Profits (that's us) average 'open rate' is about 21%. We do much better at about 45% for most of our emails - but why isn't it twice that at 90%? (Since you're reading this in the Newsletter, you already get a gold star for this one!)



3. Bookmark our Website. Sure, it's an easy address to remember ², but clicking on a bookmark takes you right there. You can visit our 'Camp Store', check out and 'chat' with who you know on the 'Staff Lists', download a Newsletter, or just look at some of the 'Photos' and daydream about camp. All of our current events are also listed on the website, so there's never an excuse to miss a thing.

4. Become a "Contributing Member". As you know, anyone who has worked at Minikani can become a member of the Alumni Community just by signing up on our website. It doesn't cost anything, and we'll make sure that they get our emails. Once a year during May we ask members to make a donation to help keep us going and to provide money we can give back to Minikani.

5. Encourage Others to Join. Right now we send emails out to 355 MAC members. But, unfortunately, we are missing a lot of people out there who you may know from Minikani. If every present member (you) would extend the invitation of membership to just one other person they know from camp who isn't yet a member, we would grow to over 700 members! Isn't there someone you can call/text/email and invite them to sign up at our website?

6. Get Involved. We're always looking for people to participate.

Have you got an idea for a Newsletter article? Can you nominate someone for the Spotlight? Do you have a memory about camp you can share? Want to



join our Board? Do you have a skill that we could use? Have you thought about what would make the MAC better? Have you ever emailed us to compliment or criticize what we do? ³ There's lots of ways you can get involved. "It takes a Community to run the Minikani Alumni."

7. Talk to Others about Minikani. Remember how hard it was to try to explain to your friends why you wanted to keep going back to Minikani? Those poor people probably still don't have a clue as to what camp is all about. As a good alumnus, your neighbors, workmates and non-camp friends need to hear about camp. Don't be shy to admit that you are a former camp counselor, tell them what a fantastic part of your life camp was, or that you send your kids to camp.

8. Ask Not. To paraphrase JFK: Ask not what the Minikani Alumni Community can do for you, ask what you can do for the Minikani Alumni Community.

9. Become Comfortable with the word 'Alumnus'. Our spell-checker reminds us every time that the singular form of 'alumni' is 'alumnus'. It's Latin – so just get over it.

¹ Saturday March 7, 2015

² www.minikanistafflodge.com

³ Don't worry – we won't take it personally

