



Summer 2015
Volume 7, Issue 3

NEWSLETTER

Alumni Weekend

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Thanks To: Jon McLaren, Amanda Hedrickson, and Jason Horowitz

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The much-anticipated Alumni Weekend 2015 at Camp Minikani is almost here! August 29th and 30th will be your opportunity to once again “Come Home to Minikani”.

This awesome Alumni event is only held every other year - so you won't want to miss out this year, or you'll have to wait until 2017! Family, friends and significant others are more than welcome to join us at Minikani. We have plenty of fun activities planned again this year. Lake Amy Belle and the pool will be available for all your waterfront enjoyment, the rock wall will be ready to be rocked, and every other skill that you did 'back in the day' will be available. Camp fires, camp songs and a softball game are just some of the activities planned for the evening. There are no extra fees - All meals and activities are included with the registration price.

Alumni can choose to come for the day on Saturday or stay for the whole weekend through Sunday. Accommodations will be made for you to stay in the Minikani cabin of your choice! Whatever your plans, we promise you'll have a great time at our summer homeland!

Prices for this year's Weekend are a real bargain. Don't wait until it's too late. Registration for the weekend is available through our website.

Check-in time for the weekend is 11:00 a.m. at the new Leadership Lodge on Saturday, August 29th. Should you have any questions about the weekend please contact John Hyland at johnnyhyland@gmail.com. We hope to see you there!



A Letter
From Jon McLaren

August 3, 2015

Dear Friends,

Unbelievable. That's the word that keeps coming to mind as I think about the summer thus far. It's just unbelievable. Today is opening campfire for 4th session. How did that happen? This summer has gone by the fastest of any that I've experienced here at our summer home.

I didn't quite know what to expect the first session in my new role. I was prepared for what I remembered most, being an Ad Staff member. Running around, putting out fires and doing a bit of everything. I showed up early, eager and with a stomach full of butterflies.



I walked up to Council Bluff and asked "Ok, what can I do first?" The staff, replied with "We got this. You just need to head up to the parking lot and shake hands." I'll admit it was hard to let go.

So, I crutched up to the parking lot and waited anxiously for the first cars to arrive. Yes, I've spent the entire summer on crutches.

Unbelievable. I tore my ACL playing lacrosse three days before camp started. Full disclosure: Julie warned me not to join the lacrosse league. I believe her words were "You are going to get hurt. You'll play way too hard and wreck your first summer back at camp." Over zealous, me? So, I've been golf carting around with my gigantic, swollen post-op knee all summer. Lesson learned.



I'm scanning my list of campers to track down today. It includes 15 alumni kids. Unbelievable. Thank you, I know it's a big expense. I'll be sure to tell them a story about their parent(s); most likely exaggerated. I've seen alumni kids as LTs and my very own daughter, Aubrey, was a second-year Explorer. She came home and promptly displayed her Brown Rag. Unbelievable. Ian, our son, is at equestrian camp day camp this week, after 2 weeks in the BU. Julie is, in her loving way, demanding the return of Crazy Diving and the pigs to the Corral. The house is full of the Minikani Spirit.

A number of alumni have asked me what they can do the help keep the Minikani Spirit strong. The most important thing you can all do is to just send your kids, nieces, nephews and neighbors to camp. It keeps the Spirit alive. The Y is developing a



long-range facility plan for Minikani. During that time, I will be reaching out for additional support the help make those plans a reality. That being said, we've completed a place for alumni to gather at camp. Cabin 20 was host to its first post drop off alumni barbeque yesterday. The place was buzzing with generations of magic. Julie and I hope to see you at the next event.

Well, I'm off to channel my inner Andy Mendelson and take pictures. Be sure to check out our Facebook page and www.minikani.smugmug.com.

Friday, August 14 is the final closing campfire and I hope to see many of you there. It will be unbelievable.

Give a Yell,

-Jon.



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**"We make a living
by what we get,
We make a life by
what we give."
Winston Churchill**

Get Involved

By Amanda Hendrickson

With another summer here, we all can't help but have camp on our minds. From the early morning bugles, to the passwords, skills, songs, and runt hunts, we all can admit that Mama Minikani is a place we wish we were at for another summer, no matter how long we've been gone.

Even though we are now Alumni, we can still be involved with our summer homeland during the summer. Some of these ways include: doing an alumni password, teaching a skill hour(s), sending a care package to a cabin (craft supplies, candles, etc.), or sponsoring a food night in the staff lodge (we all know that staff probably needs a break from the dining hall food)!

This summer a couple alumni have done some great things at camp to get involved and the staff has loved it! Nina Darling (Shully) sponsored a food night in the staff lodge where she brought in chips, salsa, and a few boxes of freezy pops (the staff lodge wouldn't be complete without them!). Mike Jurken, his wife, Monica, and Dane Mantia also sponsored a food night with some pizzas from Pizza Hut – the pizza was a great refuel for the staff after a tough Runt Hunt that night!



We are looking to get more involved in future summers at camp! Next summer we are looking into “adopting a cabin” where alumni can choose a cabin and send it a package at the beginning of the summer with summer supplies (markers, construction paper, erasable pens, tape, etc.) – the supplies all the counselors pay for every summer to have in their cabin.

Thanks to everyone who has stopped by camp this summer or provided the staff with anything as a little “pump up”! The staff really appreciates it and we love seeing how involved we are as a community to our summer homeland.



Staff Training

2015

Wow. If you ever get the feeling that kids today are in any way inferior to what ‘we’ used to be like in the good ‘ole days, just spend a couple of hours at Minikani’s Staff Training. You won’t find a better group of talented, thoughtful, excited, and sincere young adults anywhere, believe me.

Over a dozen of us alumni accepted the invitation from camp to share some of our experiences with the 2015 staff. Two things immediately impressed me: 1) there are a lot of them. At dinner in the dining hall it seemed like we filled the whole place – where would they even fit the 250 or so additional campers this summer? All the Summer staff and all the LT III’s were there. When we met in the



Leadership Lodge after dinner, I was able to get an approximate count – about 120. We quickly broke up into 6 rotating groups, and the alumni had a chance to meet with each group as we tried to focus on a specific question.

What was my 2nd impression? Glad you asked. 2) I was impressed with the skill level and maturity of the staff. They continue to do things ‘right’ at Minikani, and any kid would be so lucky to be able to spend a week or two under their supervision. The only regret I have is that I can’t spend the whole summer once again being a proud member of the Minikani staff.

Rotating Group Questions

1. How have the skills you learned at camp impacted your professional life?
2. How has camp has made you better parent?
3. What is a time in your life when you relied on the camp community for support?
4. What regrets you have from your time at camp – what would you have done different?
5. What is your vision for camp’s future?
6. What are some vesper ideas and a review of camp ghost stories (they have all but disappeared...)?





Things I learned at camp

By Bruce Rasmussen

1. **How to live off the grid.** Back in my day we didn't have much of a 'grid' like we do today – with the internet, smart phones and Facebook. But we still had things we had to do without. Phone calls (we ALL used the one pay phone in the Staff Lodge), and mail call after lunch pretty much kept us connected to the outside world.

2. **“Time Off” is important.** My days off included hot showers, good food, sleeping late and getting

4. **Nature is all around me.** Wildflowers behind the cabin, insects sticking to the window screens, strange noises at night (bullfrogs?), star gazing on a clear night, bird songs in the morning, and watching the storm clouds over Amy Belle.

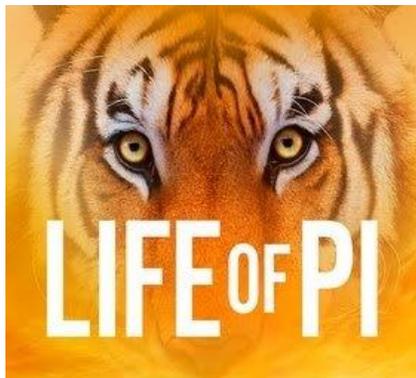
5. **I have lots of useless skills.** I can make friendship bracelets, lanyard, and copper enameling with the best of them. I can sing songs that get faster and faster (also louder and louder). I can put hand gestures to just about any song I can sing. I can guess the breed of your dog if you tell me its name. I can roast the perfect marshmallow.

9. **Be Creative.** You can hardly turn around at camp and there's another way you can be 'creative'. Plan your cabin activities, give a vesper, organize your skill area, come up with a Special Day, and reach that one kid who's not fitting in so well. It never ends. (Well, almost never...)



together with other camp people. You need some time to recharge your batteries. Oh, yeah, you need clean laundry too.

3. **“Hello” and “Good-bye”.** Firm handshakes for the arriving parents and lots of smiles for the campers can help you to get off to a great start. At the end of the session or the summer, a sincere parting is important. In his book “Life of Pi”, Yann Martel says it well as the tiger walks away from Pi: *“It's important in life to conclude things properly. Only then can you let go. Otherwise you are left with words you should have said but never did, and your heart is heavy with remorse.”*



6. **The Basic Food Groups.** Bug juice counts as a fruit, and nobody really need to know what's in Ethel's Hash. You can eat a meal in under 5 minutes if you've got other things to do. Nothing tastes better on a hot summer evening than a root beer float.

7. **Serious times are important.** Flag raising (quickly) and lowering (slowly), meal graces, password, vesper, chapel, goal setting and challenge programs all demand your respect and help to make you a well-rounded person.

8. **Plan ahead, and be ready with plan “B” and “C”.** Rainy days, medical emergencies, canoeing on the Peshtigo River, cooking over a campfire, driving the bus, planning campfires, doing skits, waterfront emergencies, missing campers. Be prepared, and be ready to problem solve on the run.

10. **Working at Minikani was the best job I ever had.** This list of things I learned helped make camp special to me. But I have to say that it was all of the people over the years who made it great. And guess what? All of those things have helped make me the person I am today. For this I am very grateful.



White Ragers

5 staff members have taken the challenge of the White Rag this summer. Ceremonies were held on two different dates in late July to accommodate everyone.

- Congratulations to the newest White Ragers:
- Jennifer Luckey**
 - Joe Horowitz**
 - Jane Wierdsma**
 - Kelsey Strode**
 - Maggie Aasen**

SpotLight On Alumni

Jason Horowitz

Jason's first year as a camper was 1986. His first year on staff was 1993, and he says he was lucky enough to have just about every job he ever wanted at camp - counselor in the BU, EU, and on Expeditions, Explorer Unit Director, LT Director, OLT Director, and Summer Program Director. His last year at camp was 2004, although he still wakes up sometimes from dreams in which he was planning Special Days at camp. He is only a couple years away from being a Minikani parent. Here's more from Jason:

◆Do you have any particularly 'fond' memories of camp?

Too many to count! On the front end, looking up to my heroes - Joe Koester welcoming me into my first cabin, Chris Atherton doing flips off the rock, Troy Lange playing Sandman at Council Bluff, John Huber driving the bus, Andy Mendelson leading Hobbit Day, George Doty playing guitar in the kybo.

And then on the back end, so many wonderful children that influenced me when I was a



counselor - a cabin teaching a kid how to swim, campers becoming counselors, building a fire with a kid in the rain in the Rockies, LT vespers, slow motion skits at campfires, watching my sister and brother grow up at camp. And if I started listing all the people I worked with who changed my life for the better, you'd have to cut out your Nature Notes from the newsletter!



◆ Did you develop any special skills while at camp?

Well, there were hard skills of course that I still use from time to time - how to build a fire, paddle a canoe, ride a horse, and pitch a tent. But the truly important skills I learned at camp are the soft skills - how to work in a group, how to be a friend, how to work hard, and although I didn't realize it at the time, how to be a parent.

◆How did you make the transition to the "real" world?

Reluctantly. I stayed at camp as long as I possibly could, and I admit that didn't really feel done when it was time to move on. But Camp is still a big part of my "real" world in lots of ways, starting with my family. Being married to Kerry is special beyond words, and there is so much of Camp in the way we do things that it helps keep my connection to Minikani strong as the years go by.

◆What work do you do now?

I am a clinical child psychologist in Madison, working primarily at an outpatient psychiatric clinic and also one day a week at an elementary school. I spend most of my days working with kids and their families, and I'm also involved in training future psychologists. I think this job is the closest thing I could find to being a life-long camp counselor. I often tell people that I learned as much about working with kids at Camp as I did in grad school. One thing I do at our clinic is run groups for middle school boys with social difficulties, and I treat each group like a new cabin and even use some of the same activities I did with my BU cabins.

◆Do thoughts of camp and Minikani people 'pop' into your head?

Every day. The friends I made at Camp are some of the most wonderful and inspiring people I have ever met. I feel lucky to be in touch with many of them, and even those I rarely see hold a special place in my heart. I wish I could say thank you to everyone for all the amazing moments they have given me. For example - this morning for some reason I woke up remembering Matt Gelb's last password. And there is really no end to stuff like that.

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◆ Please tell us about your music group “The Whiskey Farm”.

We have sometimes called our genre “Campfire Rock,” and I think the Minikani influence on our sound is not hard to hear. We have been together since 2010 and will be releasing our third record in September. We encourage singing along, dancing, and chanting at all our shows - it’s pretty similar to Council Bluff sometimes. You can hear us and learn anything else you’d want to know at thewhiskeyfarm.com or on Facebook.



◆ Anything else you’d like to share with us? Yes, this picture from Junta Day, 1995. 🏰



Missing Members

As the Minikani Alumni Community begins its 7th year, it is time to take a look at how much we have grown and look ahead to our future. It’s easy to see that our membership has not reached its full potential - yet. Since anyone who has ever worked at Minikani is considered a member of our community, there must be thousands of people out there who don’t even know that we exist. The problem is that we don’t know who is missing from our list, but you do!

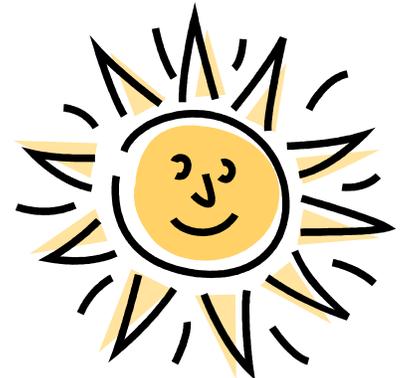
It would be great if we could double our number of members. So here’s the deal. We are asking every member of the MAC to ‘recruit’ one more member. As you look at the “Staff Lists” section of our website, can you find a name of a person you know who has not completed their profile? Then they are probably not receiving any information about the MAC. Send them an email, call, or write then and point them toward our website

and the simple registration link on the home page.

Why should a former staff member join the MAC? Here are a couple of good reasons:

- 1) Membership doesn’t cost anything – it’s free.
- 2) Previous friends from camp can reconnect with each other.
- 3) It helps you stay connected to Minikani emails, website, newsletters, camp activities, and more.
- 4) Anyone can ‘unsubscribe’ at any time (but we don’t like to think about that!).

So what do you say – can you help us grow? Give other staff members who may not have heard about us a chance to join our group. And just think – if every person just brought one person into our community, our numbers would double. Thanks in advance for giving this matter some thought.



Nature Notes

By Bruce

Butterflies – Who doesn't like butterflies? They look so pretty flying from flower to flower. They don't bite, sting, or carry human diseases. They spend most of their lives as worm-like caterpillars, growing quickly and eating like teenagers, until they enter their resting stage and emerge, after a magical transformation of body parts, into a beautiful flying creature.



After seeing the movie "Jurassic World" this summer, I wondered if dinosaurs shared the planet with butterflies, and if they actually grew to have a two-foot wingspan. (I've seen drawings of dragonflies from back then that did measure that big!)

Here's what I found out. The development of the butterflies closely followed the evolution of flowering plants, since both adults and caterpillars feed on flowering plants rather than the ferns and cycads of prehistoric ecosystems. Flowering plants became 'available' to the plant-eating dinosaurs near the end of their reign on earth, (about 65 million years ago) so it is reasonable to conclude that there were also butterflies back then.



But no one seems to be sure about this, because fossil evidence of butterflies is rare. Their soft bodies didn't turn into rock fossils, as happened to some dinosaurs. Some experts say they can trace butterflies and months, their close cousins, back 130 million years ago, which would put them on earth at the same time as the dinosaurs. Others say they only evolved about 50 million years ago, after the dinosaurs had already been extinct for 15 million years.

How big were they? As you may know, insects don't breathe with lungs, but must rely on tiny holes in their abdomen called spiracles. These openings allow air to move into the insect's body and supply their needed oxygen, although the transfer of oxygen inside the body is slow going. Earth's atmosphere back then was about 30% oxygen compared to today's 21%. This extra oxygen gave insects more energy per breath which allowed them to grow bigger bodies, perhaps as large as 1 foot across.

One more thing about butterflies – at camp. Have you ever seen butterflies swarming and drinking around a mud puddle? I've seen it happen at Minikani, especially along the road that leads into the Indian Unit from Norris Field. It turns out that this trait, called "puddling", gives butterflies their necessary dose of minerals, which their sugary flower nectar is lacking. The behavior is more common in males than females. The males incorporate the minerals into their sperm which are transferred to the female during mating to help with the viability of her eggs.



Interesting Butterfly Facts

- Butterflies are the 2nd largest group of pollinators for flowering plants, next to bees.
- Butterflies live an average of just 2-4 weeks. Some of the smallest butterflies, the blues, may only survive a few days. Butterflies that overwinter as adults, like monarchs and mourning cloaks, can live as long as 9 months.
- Butterflies need an ideal body temperature of about 85°F to fly. If the air temperature falls below 55°F, they are rendered immobile, unable to flee from predators or feed. When air temperatures range between 82°-100°F, butterflies can fly with ease. Cooler days require a butterfly to warm up its flight muscles, either by shivering or basking in the sun.
- Butterflies have only 0.04 the visual acuity of humans. They can see red, green, and yellow colors, plus other ultraviolet light rays we can't see.
- Butterflies taste with their feet and smell with their antennae. This helps them find a food source and also a good place for the female to lay her eggs.
- The top butterfly flight speed is 12 miles per hour.

