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NEWSLETTER



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Thanks To: Peter Drews, Rachael Shaff, and Sarah Burton

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Welcome to the 37th edition of the MAC Newsletter. Since October 2009 we've tried to keep you up-to-date with what is happening with your Alumni Community and what's going on at Camp Minikani.

We've got confirmation for the dates of Minikani's 100th year Celebration - **August 23-25, 2019**. It's going to be a full weekend that you won't want to miss. We'll keep you up-to-date when more details become available later this fall.

You know, there wouldn't even have been a "Camp Minikani" if there had never been a YMCA. The very first YMCA was founded in 1844 in London, England by George Williams, who aimed to put Christian principles into practice

through programs that develop a healthy "Body, Mind and Spirit".

The Milwaukee YMCA was established 14 years after that in 1858. They plan to celebrate 160 years this year with a big party at the Milwaukee Art Museum on Wednesday, November 7, 2018.

It was 61 years after that in 1919 when the Milwaukee Y purchased 40 acres of land with a farm house and a barn on Amy Belle Lake. Most of what are forests now were open fields then. Minikani became one of the 1st resident youth camps in the US, and it will soon be our turn to celebrate its past, present and future. What a great time to look back at its history and look forward to its exciting future.



CAMP NEWS

Actively Aging Camp

Who said summer camp is just for kids? On August 23, YMCA Camp Minikani, YMCA of Metro Milwaukee and AARP partnered to host a day-long camp for adults ages 50 and up. More than 90 participants experienced camp through archery, rock climbing, bingo, crafts, boating and fishing. Actively Aging Camp received great reception from participants.

Adoptive Family Camp

Minikani had a great ninth annual Adoptive Family Camp on Labor Day Weekend, with more than 36 families in attendance—more than ever before. The weekend was full of traditional activities and family games. Additionally, adults attended informative workshops on various topics surrounding adoption, while the children made friendships and tried new activities.



Homecoming Campfire

Homecoming Campfire will be held at 5:30 p.m. on Friday, October 26. The event is designed to bring together summer 2018 campers and counselors by reconnecting over a traditional campfire. Snacks and hot beverages will also be provided. Campers and families may participate in the following activities from 5:30 to 6:15 p.m.:

- Skit sign up & planning
- Camp-inspired crafts
- Traditional camp games
- Guided walk-throughs of camp
- Coffee, hot cocoa, caramel apple making

If you only wish to attend the campfire, please meet us at 6:15 p.m. outside of the Dining Hall.

If you are interested in learning more about any of the upcoming activities or to register for an event, go to the website minikani.org or call 262.251.9080.

Thanks to Rachael Shaff at Minikani for sharing this information.

Winter Camp 2018

Winter Camp will be held from Dec. 27-30. Registration is open for Winter Camp for campers ages 7-15. At a time of year when most kids are inside, winter campers have a blast tromping around in the snow and meeting new friends at YMCA Camp Minikani. In addition to a handful of adventures at Minikani, campers visit Sunburst Ski Area in Kewaskum, Wisconsin, where they snowboard, ski or snow-tube. On their last night, campers and counselors celebrate “New Year’s Eve, Eve, Eve,” which is a camper-created carnival and dance party, culminating with a homemade ball drop.

Staff Treat 2018

How does this sound for a cool Staff Treat after a long, hot day with the kids?



Compliments of the Alumni Community, we offered four flavors of ice cream, Oreos, assorted gummies, fudge shortbread cookies, miniature heath bars, Andes mints, fresh bananas, M&M’s, rainbow sprinkles, whipped cream and maraschino cherries? Certainly not a low calorie treat for the hard working summer staff of 2018. Many thanks to Chris Fink for assembling all of the above on August 9th. 🌲

Summer 2018

By Peter Drews

Dear Alumni Community,

As I'm sure you all remember, the end of summer happens all too quickly. One minute, you're busy planning wild theme days, yelling at the top of your lungs, consoling a homesick camper into the wee hours of the night. The next minute finds you sitting at the closing campfire for the final time of the summer. 24 hours later, camp has been taken down and everyone has left our summer home for the year. The transition from frantic activity to absolute finality is jarring.



We've given it some time, and it is easier to look back on Minikani's 99th summer with more dispassion. We can look at challenging moments with clear eyes and celebrate successes with a rested mind. I'm very happy to say that we had a lot more of those successes this past summer than we did challenges. What an incredible summer! It is hard to be perfectly objective, but I honestly believe that the summer of 2018 was the best summer I've taken part in as a staff member at Minikani. Even with distance, it is hard to understand why. It felt like our campers were

(almost) always ready and willing to dive into this crazy landscape from day one. It felt like our staff team was as united as I can ever remember; even when we were separated by distance, we were all pushing towards the common goal of making a safe, incredibly fun home for every single camper. We felt the support and love of our entire camp community, which includes all of you! I am so grateful to be looking back on this experience and finding joy and happiness in everything.

Enough of the sweeping generalizations and on to some tangible nuggets from our summer. As many of you who have visited recently will know, Minikani as a physical space is continuing to evolve. We have a beautiful new entrance sign thanks to some really generous alumni contributions. Tom's Treehouse, in the making since the end of Tom Cramer's last in 2016, was constructed and used as a campout space all summer long. The Explorer Unit Director's home (known as The Apartment to our current staff) got an overhaul and now features many more windows and far fewer critters. We have a beautiful fleet of paddleboards, a room in the lodge dedicated to podcasting, and a brand new Adventure Challenge shed (with housing for the director!). Of course, much more is exactly the same. Our counselors all left Minikani with a familiar smell wafting from their clothes and bedding (a smell that I absolutely love! Other may not always appreciate its greatness).



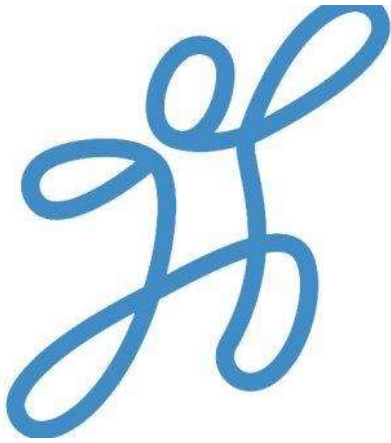
Belunda lives on in Amy Belle, Pine Forest is as beautiful and spiritual a place as it ever has been, Mud Lake remains overrun with frogs and mosquitos and tranquility; in short, Minikani remains a beautiful place to spend a summer.

It's hard to summarize the programming of the summer – there is just such a huge volume of activities that happen over the course of 9 weeks here. But I'll share a few highlights that will hopefully trigger some nostalgia and memory. As has been the case for each of my 18 years at camp, every week features a Unit Day for each camper population on camp (i.e., the Boys Unit might have Iron Chef Day, while the Girls Unit has Backyard Sports Day). Once a summer, all of camp's units combine for an All Camp Day. This year featured the 4th edition of Centennial Forest Festival.



We had a band performance, Lucky Diop (a Minikani Alumnus) led us in songs and dances, we had a dunk tank, we had SnoCones – it rocked. We had yet another Runt Hunt this summer, and for the 2nd time in 3 years the staff caught every single kid. As a Summer Camp Director, the Runt Hunt feels like a gigantic missing camper emergency, so I take pride in our staff's ability to methodically locate each and every child, even when they're trying to remain lost.

Continued next page



We also worked on expanding a partnership with Playworks Wisconsin, an organization that works to teach social and emotional skills in youth across the greater Milwaukee area. Many of our counseling staff have worked for Playworks (myself included), and this year we gave the opportunity to about 20 Junior Coaches (4th and 5th grade leaders in their schools) to come to camp for \$20. The partnership was great for many reasons. For one, we were able to open up Minikani to campers who otherwise wouldn't have heard about us, and who likely would not be able to afford to come. We fundamentally believe that a more diverse and inclusive Minikani is a better Minikani. Plus, these kids are leaders in their schools. They volunteer their time during and after the school day to make their playgrounds safer, more inclusive spaces for all students. Getting to meet these amazing kids in the off-season and then to watch them absolutely thrive at Minikani was the most meaningful experience of my summer. Programs like that are possible in large part because of the generosity of donors, as I know many of you are. Thank you so much for making those experiences possible for really special kids.

Looking forward, we have Minikani's 100th Anniversary Celebration to look forward to! Save the dates: August 23 – 25th of next summer. Many more details are forthcoming, but there will be ample opportunities to celebrate 100 years of an incredible institution that has given all of us so much joy, meaning, and love. In the more immediate future, we will be hosting Camp SOUL in mid-October. Camp SOUL (Supporting Others, Understanding Loss) is a free overnight for children who have experienced the death of a loved one. It's one of my favorite weekends at camp. If you're interested in volunteering your time over the weekend of October 13 – 14, you can email me at pdrews@ymcamke.org.



I'm sure there are many other stories to tell, updates to provide, etc. But hopefully this has left you with a bit of color regarding the goings-on at Minikani. Thanks to everyone who came out to visit this summer – it's always a blast having you! To those who couldn't make it out this past year, Summer 100 is the perfect time to make the trek out. Hope to see you all soon.

In the Spirit,

Peter Drews
Summer Camp Director



The Case for Camp

By Peg L. Smith*

Camp has a lasting impact. One of the greatest gifts you can give a child is a sense of success and achievement. Camp teaches kids how to be active participants, ask questions, ask for help, and try new things. They leave understanding that it's okay to feel a little uncomfortable sometimes, because that's generally what happens when you're getting ready to learn something. The camp experience translates back in real-world experience — in an "I can" attitude.

We need to advocate for our young people. We should promote opportunities for kids — give them camp experiences that serve as an antidote for the world's challenges. We need to recognize this is not a series of frivolous activities. We often think if it looks like fun it must be unimportant, but "fun" is a young person's "work" — to learn, to grow, to be productive, creative, and happy. If they don't do that work, they won't turn into healthy adults.

*Peg L. Smith is the former chief executive officer of the American Camp Association.



Survey Results

By Bruce

The MAC Board of Directors would like to thank all the alumni who took the time to answer the recent survey emailed to them. It proved to be really helpful in planning for the Holiday Party and also helps us know what the community is thinking.



I don't think that anyone who was around in 2009 when the MAC started up realized that our community would include alumni that are 50 years apart! The needs and concerns of alumni who worked at Minikani 50 years ago are different than those who are still working there today. I definitely belong to the former group, and I think my love for the place is just as strong and sincere as anyone's. But you can understand the challenge it is for the MAC Board to represent the great diversity that makes up our community.

One thing that helps us is MAC's Mission Statement, found at the top of the next column and also at our website. (minikanistafflodge.com) Crafted with broad strokes, the statement gives us direction and at the same time prevents us from veering too far from what we cannot do. To me, keeping connected with Minikani is the most important goal, with support of its traditions also very important.



Our Mission Statement

The Minikani Alumni Community is a group of former staff members dedicated to maintaining our connection with our summer homeland. Through acts of fellowship and service, we strive to honor our past experiences, support current summer programming, and preserve Minikani traditions for the future.

I'd like to think that the MAC is very open and transparent in doing what they do. I'm being honest when I say there is no fiendish plot to take all your money or jam your email boxes with advertisers or money-back guarantees. Instead, we plan and carry out social events for our members. We work with camp to schedule these activities. We try to keep everyone informed with our quarterly Newsletter. We also share our thoughts (and photos) on Facebook, and encourage you to do the same. We are a 100% volunteer organization, and always welcome your input and help.



Donations???

Members continue to contact us (minikanistafflodge@gmail.com) and ask about making donations to the MAC. For the past 3 years we have not accepted any donations to the MAC. Instead, we've asked our members to consider giving directly to Minikani. That allows us to focus on planning great activities to keep you connected to Minikani, and gives camp the opportunity to accept your donations. If you are interest in making a gift to Minikani, here's a link you can use that will ensure your gift goes directly to Minikani:

[Make a Gift to Minikani](#)



Please Save the Date

Make plans now to join your fellow Alumni and their friends at Third Space Brewing for the annual Holiday Party on December 15th, 2018. Watch your email and our website for more information coming soon.

SpotLight

On Alumni

By Sarah Burton

◆ **What’s your history at camp?**

My first summer at camp was when I was 8 and was placed in a cabin with my sister and our two best friends, who were also sisters. If Sarah Kodner and Mary O’Malley are reading, we apologize for terrorizing you during 4B of summer 1999. I stayed at camp through 2012, during which I was the Adventure Challenge Director.

◆ **Do you have a favorite job at camp?**

I had a great time working with my Adventure Challenge staff when I was on Ad Staff, and had a great last summer with Ryan Wnuk and Sarah Whaley on the Staff Affairs Committee. But my favorite job at camp was as an explorer counselor, leading B-week trips with Kevin Jennings and Sharon Cross. It was so rewarding watching explorers develop friendships while working with friends I had made myself through the explorer program.



Rhinelander

◆ **Have a favorite place at camp?**

Pine Forest or the gunnel. (The entrance to the Girl’s Unit from Norris Field.)



@ Bucca

◆ **Do you have any special memories from camp?**

Too many to count. While not a memory at camp, my “camp year” still maintains a tradition of feasting together the day after Thanksgiving. We celebrated 8 years at Bucca Di Beppo in Milwaukee, and last year moved to Wyatt Caldwell’s Bayview house (RIP Bucca’s). While most of us still keep in touch throughout the year, it’s been great getting everyone in one place together to catch up and reminisce on our years on staff together.

◆ **Were there any special skills you learned while at camp?**

I am a more adaptable and creative professional from my experiences at camp. Working with so many people with different leadership styles and diverse perspectives while at camp has taught me how to find common ground with anyone I work with and apply different lenses to solving business problems.

◆ **Some of your family members have also been on the staff at camp. How was that?**

My older sister Lisa and I started at camp together, in the same cabin for a week in 2008. Our time at camp together went from traumatic to awesome once we both were on staff. We have a lot of shared memories, experiences and friends through our summers on staff together.

◆ **How did you make the transition from camp to the “real” world?**

I started a corporate finance role in Chicago right after college graduation, bringing my camp career to an end. After 4 years in

Chicago, I now live in Denver, CO and work in healthcare finance and strategy.

◆ **If you could change one thing about camp, what would it be?**

I really like the recent changes to the LT program to focus on holistic leadership development rather than developing leaders for camp. I would love to see this momentum continue for LTs through even more community involvement and leadership engagement throughout the year.

◆ **You’ve been described you as a “Great Counselor”. What makes a Great Counselor?**

I developed a lot of self-confidence at camp and never had a hard time being my true (and goofy) self at camp. I think my campers saw this and were able to feel comfortable in their own skin.

◆ **Anything else to share?**

I always love to connect to Minikani alumni – if you’re ever in Denver, don’t hesitate to reach out!



Sarah & Lisa

Nature Notes

By Bruce

Mudpuppies

First a quick science review: Animals with backbones are grouped as fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals. Amphibians are distinguished from the others by having a watery gill-breathing larval stage that is usually followed by a land living lung-breathing adult stage. Amphibians include frogs, toads, newts and salamanders. The bullfrog has already been the topic of an earlier Nature Notes. In this “Notes” I’m going to focus on one kind of salamander that is found at Minikani.

You say you’ve never seen a salamander at camp? I’m not surprised. They are generally nocturnal and prefer to spend their days under rocks or logs in moist areas. As amphibians, they must rely on their moist skin for breathing, due to poorly developed lungs. If you’ve seen one at camp, it was probably when you were hunting wood for a fire, or moving rocks for a cabin beautification project. Minikani’s most common salamanders are the blue-spotted salamander and the spotted salamanders.



Blue Spotted Salamander



There is another salamander called the Mudpuppy (*Necturus maculosus*). They have flat heads, wide tails, stubby legs, and feet with four distinct toes. These amphibians never complete their metamorphosis and develop lungs. Since they keep their fish-like gills to breathe, they also keep a fish’s habitat and never leaves the water to live on land like most other amphibians. (The water living frog tadpole eventually changes into an adult frog and can live on land.)

Now you’re going to have to promise to not tell any Red Swimmers what comes next: Like many lakes and rivers in Wisconsin, Minikani has these large (12 to 16 inches long) creatures living in Amy Belle. I’ve found them hiding themselves in vegetation and under rocks and logs right in camp’s swimming areas. They have mucous glands which provide a slippery slimy protective coating, which makes them difficult for predators to catch. You’ll definitely feel the slime if you startle a mudpuppy in the water and it quickly swims away from you. They are, however, perfectly harmless.

Mudpuppies usually emerge at night to feed on whatever prey they can catch, including crayfish, worms, insect larvae, small fish and snails. They hunt by smell, not sight, which allows them to find their prey even if it is hidden in the bottom mud.

Mating for the mudpuppy occurs between autumn and winter, but the female stores the sperm until April to June, when the eggs are fertilized internally and deposited. To do this, she crawls under a log or a large flat rock, flips on her back, and individually sticks each egg to the bottom of the log or rock. The eggs take 1 to 2 months to develop, depending on the water temperature. (Longer if it is in Amy Belle in April – the water is cold!) She remains with them for protection until they hatch. Mudpuppies have been known to live 20 years.



Birds Eat Bugs

Just in case you were curious, most, but not all, birds eat insects. Scientists have determined that the world's birds eat 450 to 550 million tons of insects each year.

That's as many as 20 quadrillion individual bugs, a study reports.

The study highlights the important role birds play in keeping plant-eating insect populations under control, researchers say. Other predator groups such as bats, primates, shrews, hedgehogs, frogs, salamanders and lizards also seem to be valuable bug eaters, but because most of them don’t fly they are less effective natural enemies of plant-eating insects.

Why are plants so important? They form the bottom of the food pyramid we all need to survive.

