

January 2017
Volume 9, Issue 1



NEWSLETTER

Inside this Issue

- 1 2017 New Year
- 2 Peter Drews
Summer Camp Director
- 3 Holiday Bash 2016
- 3 Dinner Around the World
- 4 7 Things...
- 4 Coming Events
- 5+6 Spotlight on Alumni
Jeremy Welland
- 7 Nature Notes

Thanks To: Peter Drews and
Jeremy Welland

Bruce Rasmussen, Editor
BruceRass@gmail.com

Welcome to 2017. Keeping you connected to Camp Minikani is one of our most important goals here at the MAC. Letting you know what's happening at camp and with the alumni community keeps us busy. As an alumnus, we know you look back at your time at Minikani with positive thoughts and fond memories. Let's hope that the New Year continues the tradition.

This year should be another great one. Minikani is just 2 years shy of its 100th anniversary, and from what we hear it's going to be a fantastic year-long celebration. There's a new Summer Camp Director and lots of bright new LT and counselor faces to welcome the new and previous campers. There will also be more opportunities for alumni to "Come Home" to Minikani and spend some time doing the camp things you love to do.

Here are some things you can do to help the MAC and help yourself keep connected:

- ◆ Open and read your email from us. That includes this quarterly Newsletter. (Thanks!)
- ◆ Make communication a two-way street. Share your thoughts, ideas, skills and memories with us. We love to get feedback.
- ◆ Tell others about the MAC and Minikani. Get them interested in what we do and what Minikani is all about.
- ◆ "Come Home" to Minikani in 2017. Spring Work Day, volunteer at camp this summer, Alumni Weekend, etc. You'll find a list of events on page 4.



Peter Drews

Summer Camp Director



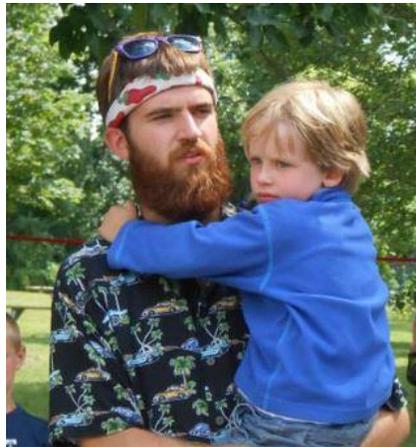
I met with Peter on a cold December morning at camp. Sitting next to the warm fireplace in Halquist, I was able to conduct my interview. As he sipped from his “Goofy” coffee mug, I asked for his history at Minikani. Like many, he began as an 8 year old, and quickly fell under the spell of camp. He remembers the mystical way he was welcomed to camp by his counselor Brian Digate, and he just knew he was in for a great time. Fast forward 16 years, and he is now the Summer Camp Director.

Peter admitted that he took one year off from camp. After his LT 3 year, he had an opportunity to travel overseas and work on his running, a skill that he worked on for college opportunities.



He returned to visit camp that summer, and quickly fell back under Minikani’s magnetic spell. The next summers he continued to develop his counseling skills through the Boy’s Unit, Minicamp, OLT, and Assistant Summer Camp Director. He says that ‘counseling’ of all kind is what he likes to do best at camp.

His favorite place at camp is the far North end of Mud Lake, near the ragger points. It’s a place he can go and spend the time in reflection. Camp is always a busy place, but this spot gives him a chance to find himself. His favorite song is “Princess Pat”, and remembers a favorite skit when Carl Fudner used a stuffed duck and made everyone laugh. His morning Skills as a counselor were Adventure Challenge and Gun ‘N Run. If given a super power, he’d choose time travel and go back to America before the colonists arrived.



I asked Peter “What makes Minikani so great?” Giving credit to Tom Cramer, he agreed that the power of Minikani lies in matching kids with counselors who are just a little older than they are. In this role, counselors get to focus on kids one-to-one in an atmosphere of respect, caring, support, and most of all fun.

Being able to encourage people of all ages to become better persons, while having fun, is important to Peter. Staff training, he said, is an opportunity to give counselors the skills they need to do this, along with a knowledge of the wonderful Minikani traditions we all know and love. For him, working at camp isn’t a career, it’s a calling.



I asked Peter what he thought alumni could do to help camp. He immediately replied, “Send me an email, and if possible, give us some of your time”. He would love to have more alumni volunteer to come to camp in the summer and help out with skills, cabin activities, special days, etc. It’s a win/win for the alumni and the present counselors, who appreciate learning from someone who has camping experiences. He would also like to work on getting alumni and older staff to connect on career possibilities. Some kind of a listing that could match volunteering alumni in various careers (education, law, accounting, non-profit, marketing, etc.) with current staff members would help the staff see what’s possible for their future and also help with career decisions.

As an alumnus, Peter welcomes your contact with any thoughts, suggestions, ideas, and plans that you may have. Encouraging others to become a better person is what Peter does well, and he looks forward to hearing from you -

pdrews@ymcamke.org 

Holiday Bash '16



Do you think that a Winter Storm Warning with snow and ice covered freeways coupled with plunging arctic temperatures could keep Minikani Alumni from celebrating the Holiday together? Think again. The 2016 Holiday Bash this year was held at the new Third Place Brewery in Milwaukee. Almost 100 alumni and friends met at a special place, with special people, and a special purpose: To celebrate their Minikani friendships and help send kids to camp in 2017.

Hopefully you've heard of the Third Place Brewery in Milwaukee. Kevin Wright and Andy Gehl, both alumni, welcomed us into their brewery for the 'Bash'. It's warm, welcoming visitor's bar opened up to the warehouse, which was decorated with lights and long tables of food.

A familiar face at the bar (Tom Cramer) poured the beers as we celebrated the season. Raffle tickets for sporting events, a dinner at cabin 20 at camp, and a wooden memento made from Fireside Lodge's old, reclaimed oak floor helped raise money for the MAC's Campership Fund.



A lot of credit has to go to Jenny Risch and her 'team' of Board Members for hosting the annual get together. How great is it that we, as a community, can celebrate the season and spend time with friends, while at the same time help kids next summer have the Minikani experience that we all enjoyed? Thanks to everyone who participated, donated, organized, and supported this year's Bash.



Brown Rag

"Four Things"

Four things a man must learn to do,
 If he would make his record true;
 To think without confusion, clearly,
 To love his fellowman sincerely,
 To act from honest motives purely,
 To trust in God and Heaven
 Securely.



"Dinner Around the World" Saturday March 4, 2017

Yes, that's right. We here at the MAC call it the "Dinner Around the World", but it actually doesn't have to be a Dinner – it could be any kind of gathering of Minikani Alumni (or a single alumnus) on Saturday March 4th. Any time of the day, too. (Think coffee, drinks, lunch, etc.) And it certainly doesn't have to be Around the World, because it can be held just about anywhere. Previous Dinners have taken place in Texas, Australia, Madison, Thailand, New York, California, and even Hubertus. This's year's Dinner could be right in your own back yard! In the past Dinners have been held at private homes, party rooms, bars, and even truck stops. They may involve eating, drinking, stories laughing, memories, or whatever.

What makes the MAC Dinner so special is that we're all doing it on the same day. We can communicate via social media with other Dinners and share our activities and fun.

Please think about what you might come up with for a Dinner in your part of the World and let us know.

minikanistafflodge@gmail.com



7 Things.....

By Bruce Rasmussen

Alesandra Dubin wrote a recent article in *Today* titled “7 Things I wish I knew before sending kids to sleepaway camp”. In her article she gives parents helpful things to know about sending their kid to camp. I’ve taken her 7 suggestions (in **boldface**) and given similar tips for Counselors (in regular font) who will be working at the camps. I’ve titled my article “7 things I wish I knew before becoming a counselor”.

1) **Pack light. Kids aren’t going to need half the clothes you pack for them, especially boys.**



As a counselor, it won’t take long for you to settle into your ‘Camp Clothes’ – T-shirts and shorts, with an occasional sweatshirt. And a swimming suit. Do not bring anything expensive. Recycle and reuse to your advantage. And don’t forget a very valuable resource that might be available to you: the Lost and Found.

2) **Don’t obsess. Save yourself emotional discomfort by allowing kids to make the break from you.**



Your 2 main jobs will be to make sure the campers are safe and having fun. As their counselor (not parent), it’s OK to have fun right along with them. Enjoy!

3) **Zip-lock bags to the rescue. 1 or 2 gallon bags work best for everything.**



Ditto on the bags, especially for any food items. Don’t forget other necessities: duct tape, markers, comics, matches, and hard candy pieces for general camper bribery (It works!).

4) **As parent, use the time your kids are gone for yourself. Get a massage, be spontaneous, enjoy the quiet time.** Make sure you get some time away from camp and your campers. Go out of your way to socialize with other staff and have some fun yourself. Days off are for sleeping, eating, laundry, eating again and fun.

5) **Understand that kids need time to adjust. A rocky start may lead to a beautiful experience. Don’t over-stress.** Don’t let your first impressions of your campers determine the whole session. Chances are they will not be the same person on the last day of the session that they were on the first – it’s all up to you.

6) **Don’t panic. When kids are out of sight, it’s hard to measure the emergency of their complaints and micro-dramas.** Give your campers the gift of independence and let them shine in their own way. But also don’t be absent – you’re in charge now. The fact that they will look up to you as a role model is important.

7) **Let them fly without you. Growth ‘happens’ when you’re at camp. They will come back different - in a good way.** Believe it or not, you will grow too, and become different. You won’t be the same person at the end of the summer. Being a counselor will be the most positive, rewarding time of your life. 

Coming Events

March 4: Dinner Around the World. See article on page 3

April 23: Pancake Breakfast at Minikani. 8:30 am to 1:30 pm. Great food and an opportunity to participate in camp activities. Adults \$10, Kids \$5.

May 13: Spring Workday at Camp. Everyone’s invited to come and help get camp ready for summer.

June 18: First day of camp. Let the memories continue...

August 26 & 27 Alumni Weekend. More info to come.

December ??: MAC’s Annual Holiday Party 

SpotLight

On Alumni

By Jeremy Welland

◆ **What is your history at camp?**
 Cue John Prine’s *Paradise*: When I was a child, my family would travel, to western Wisconsin, where my Minikani memories were born. Okay, here’s the history through Jeremy Welland’s camp experience.

I spent nine years on camp staff, starting in 1990 as an LT III. The formative years were ones to soak up lessons from older counselors and to shape who I wanted to be as a counselor; I looked up to Jay Farring, John Bolger, Sean LaRoque, Greg Branch, and too many to list. I took something from everyone, figuratively—and sometimes literally, when I failed to



return that borrowed Lacoste t-shirt. These

stolen moments occurred most often when others didn’t realize us Young Ones were watching, and they’ve extended beyond camp and made me the person I am today.

I was a Boy’s Unit counselor for one year, an explorer counselor, a leadership training counselor, an assistant waterfront / explorer director (and to this day, the only employee Kevin Casper ever managed), and the program director for four wonderful years. I made \$90 per week in my first year and left in 1999 as the highest paid staff member with a weekly salary of \$250. We’d cash our checks at the Piggly Wiggly and have just enough

to buy Kodiak, Mountain Dew and a few sleep-deprived hours off before we started back again. They were fun, salad days.

◆ **Any particularly ‘fond’ memories of camp?**
 My camp memories are simple flash photos in my mind of light contrasts and visceral feelings. A circle of seated LTs in Fireside with brown bags and candle-light faces, one-by-one sharing stories until all the bags are lit. A little girl on a chair, mortified as a bevy of boys counselors bellow, Shook Me All Night Long, or croon, You Lost That Loving Feeling.

A whisper into the ear of a newly minted Ragger, kneeling, as a counselor ties a square knot behind her neck. Staff lodge skit planning. Give a Yell from the bus on its return from camp. Lice! Bug juice. Suzy pin. Buddy checks. Password. My best friends. Mama Minikani. To remember all this fondness at once is dizzying. So, I have it on a slow release program. Facebook. Milwaukee visits. Fantasy Football with camp alumni.

◆ **Do you have a special “place” at camp?**
 My special place at camp was Freetime after dinner, taking one or more kids out sailing during rest period. Of course the wind never blew, so for a few quiet moments we’d talk at first about *nothing*—penny toads along the shores of Cabin 18, the Note Delivery booth at last night’s carnival, earning a green band in canoeing, the stack of cold grilled cheese on a plastic oval dish, winning the Horse-n-goggle extra chocolate chip cookie. Then *nothing* suddenly turned into *Something*, just like the capricious wind shift and ripples on the water. *Something* now was a brother who



also hunted toads but went off to college and was sorely missed; *Something* was a mother who wrote and delivered him little notes in his backpack, but now only half as many since the divorce; *Something* was a friend who used to eat grilled cheese with him at school, but no longer. Hmphf. There never seemed to be enough time in the universe to solve *Something*, anything in that moment. The only thing to do on a lake with no wind is listen. And then hand over a paddle because we needed to row back to shore. Sailing is a lot like canoeing on Lake Amy Belle. Bonus fond memory: The “e” was an add by August.

◆ **Please tell us about your family.**
 I’m not sure if this rule is still in place, but while I was at camp, 100% of staff were required to identify and marry someone from camp. True story. Just ask Perry, Jon, Drew, Sean, Jason, Kristin, Trish, and a few dozen more. For me, legend has it that on Sadie Hawkins Day, I heard a gun fire which got all the boys up and running. Christine (Bremner) lasered in on me and gave chase. I tripped on purpose so she’d catch
Continued on next page

me. And because the paper-and-crayon certificate detailing our union wasn't recognized as "legal" by the state, I married Christine (now Welland) for the second time here in San Francisco seven years ago at a hippy church in the Haight district and we celebrated our reception a park forest. We now have two very smiley, mopsy-haired toddlers—Lula, 3, and Tamu, 5, who love ballet and garbage trucks, respectively.



Lula is named after our maternal grandmothers (Louise and Linda). Funny enough, former counselor Drew Hayes later and independently named his daughter Lula...you guessed it, after a grandma. Tamu comes from a Liberian Vai tribe name on my mother's, Yatta, side and means *All Is Yours*. Bonus family fact: I sing John Prine's *Paradise* to the kids at bedtime.



◆ **Any special skills you developed at camp?**

I developed many skills at camp and have the colored bands to prove it. Although all skill development is valuable—maybe with the exception of OMAVs (one man aquatic vehicles...do they still have those?)—the skills that have been burned indelibly into my brain are from LT weekends and staff training. I pull out that crap constantly with my little ones. And sometimes with my big ones at work.



◆ **Tell us what work you do now.**

I joined a new company, PayPal, in November last year as the Head of Global People Analytics. Some of you whipper snappers out there might use Venmo (a PayPal company). In my spare time, I serve as president of the board of a YMCA in downtown San Francisco which operates a number of community benefit organizations. I also teach in the school of engineering and computer sciences as an adjunct faculty member in the Data Analytics master's degree program.

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

I never did. I just keep getting additional 5-year telecommuting extensions after I turned 20 on Sugar Mountain. Camp lives on. I can see it in the alumni who send their kids back, some from other states. It turns out there is no transition to the real world. Whoa. Mind. Blown. Blue pill Matrix shit. Kidding aside, I love to see that many of Minikani's alumni are

doing diverse, exciting things. My white rag was about dedicating my life in service to kids. I try to live that dedication with the work I do.

◆ **If you could go back and re-live your time at camp, is there anything you would do differently?**

No. Not a thing. Regret nothing. Even if it was partially my fault I should've thought through the mud wrestling and Harley Day differently. I love to live every moment, the good, bad, hard, disastrous, humbling, and joyous.

◆ **Anything else you'd like to share with Minikani alumni?**

Be happy. Practice happiness. Seriously. Be grateful and involve others in defining and reaching your goals.

I miss closing with this, so I'll leave you with:

In the Ragger Spirit,

Jeremy Welland,

YMCA Camp Minikani Program
Director 1996-1999



Nature Notes

By Bruce

Nuthatches

Nuthatches are one of the few birds in North America that can walk headfirst down a tree trunk. They'll zigzag every which way over tree trunks and branches but walking headfirst down a trunk is their preferred way to search for insects hiding in the bark. It's a trick that helps them find insects overlooked by all the heads-up woodpeckers.



Nuthatches are tree birds that can be found in all types of forests as well as orchards, residential areas with lots of trees, and even city parks if there are enough trees. The easiest place to find nuthatches is at winter bird feeders that offer sunflower seeds or suet. Nuthatches that come to feeders often become quite bold around people, and will let you get very close. Watch a nuthatch at a sunflower feeder and you'll see how they got their name, which originally was 'nuthack': They will fly away with a seed, wedge it into a crevice, and then hack it open with their bills.

These are stocky little birds with short tails. They are smaller than a sparrow, but stocky enough to sometime give the impression of being larger. All four of our species

of nuthatches have dark caps, white faces, and blue-gray backs, wings, and tails.

A mated pair will stay together all year long. As they forage around through the woods, they keep in touch by a nasal "yank-yank" call that sounds very much like the squeak of two large tree branches rubbing together in the wind. Birds frequently mimic common background noises – it's a great way for two birds to maintain contact without attracting the attention of predators.

New Bat Species Discovered In Wisconsin

DNR officials announced the discovery of a new bat species in Wisconsin for the first time in more than 60 years when researchers found scores of the bats near the Sugar River in Rock County last summer. The new species — known as an evening bat — was found living in the hollows of trees.

Evening bats were discovered by researchers studying summer habitats of other bat species that are vulnerable to white-nose syndrome, a deadly disease that has killed millions of bats nationwide.

It's not clear why the new species showed up. One explanation is to fill the void left by the death of bats susceptible to white-nose syndrome.

Evening bats do not appear to be harmed by white-nose syndrome because they don't join other bats in large caves to hibernate through the winter.



Lunar Halos



You're outside on a moonlit night, you glance up, and there is the moon shining brightly, but around it is a ring of light, a glowing ring that is some distance from the moon itself. Old folk tradition says this means rain is on the way – or at least it might be on the way. On two of three occasions, it will rain or snow within 24 hours following a lunar halo.

The halo is caused by very high, very thin cirrostratus clouds. These clouds are so thin that if it weren't for the halo, you might not even notice them. They are about six or seven miles up and composed entirely of ice crystals.

As moonlight passes through the clouds, the ice crystals act like prisms and refract the light. When you look at a spot on the halo, you are seeing moonlight that might have landed far away if the ice crystals hadn't bent it toward you. Occasionally you may see moonlight passing through lower clouds that are made up of water droplets, not crystals. This type of light area is called a corona, and it will always appear to be touching the moon. You'll never confuse a corona with a halo if you remember that the halo never appears to be touching the moon.

