



NEWSLETTER



Facebook post from YMCA Camp Minikani on 1/4/21
“Be sure to head on over to our website and register your child today for Summer 2021 at YMCA Camp Minikani! Both Day Camp and Overnight is now open for new and returning families.”
<https://www.minikani.org/>

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Thanks To: Eli Fyksen, Jenny Risch and Emily Mazzulla

Bruce Rasmussen, Editor
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What a wonderful sight. Maybe it's a tiny peek at the light at the end of the tunnel. Perhaps the tip of the iceberg that we're heading into. It's almost too good to be true, but there it was: "Registration for Camp Minikani is now open for the Summer of 2021". Sweet words.

As Minikani alumni, we can be just as hopeful as the kids, parents, counselors, staff, LT's, and others that we're heading into a normal summer this year.

In this edition of the Newsletter you'll be able to learn what's happening with the LT Program, how some deserving kids are planning to get to camp (and how we're helping), and what's up with the Friends of Minikani There's also a Spotlight and some Nature Notes for those who are interested.

As always, please feel free to contact the MAC with comments, questions and ideas for future Newsletters.

LT Program 2021

Over the course of this turbulent year, many adjustments needed to be made at Minikani, and the Leadership Training Program is no exception. As we know, the LT Program has been one of the core experiences we provide at Minikani for many years, providing in-depth character development for our young leaders.

Like our other overnight programs, we had to make the challenging and disheartening decision to cancel our LT sessions for the summer of 2020. While this was difficult for our LTs and staff alike, we are eager to have them return to camp next summer to enjoy the experience they missed out on in 2020. Our incoming LT1s from last year will get their full LT1 experience of community building on the Superior Hiking Trail, our LT2s will get the opportunity to expand their development through two weeks on on-camp and community service, and our LT3s will get the culminating experience of co-counseling over the course of four weeks.

In light of the social-distanced world we still find ourselves in, we have been excited to create some virtual programs to supplement our LTs development during the school year. In December, we facilitated our very first virtual LT Weekend (with a short, distanced, masked on camp experience) in which we were able to reconnect with our Ts, unpack this past year together, and dive back in to exploring their roles as young leaders at camp and in their communities.


We are also launching our new LT Pod Program which will run over the next few months until the start of summer. Through this new experience, LTs will be split up into smaller groups that will meet every month virtually with a current Minikani staff member. Meetings will focus on discussion-based learning, community building, and navigating the meaning of service and leadership in this current climate. We are looking forward to working alongside our leaders to reignite the Spirit of Minikani this year!

Eli Fyksen
Executive Director
Camp Minikani

Update from the Friends of Minikani

As many alumni are aware, the Friends of Minikani group* has been actively engaging the YMCA in discussions regarding the future & sustainability of Camp Minikani. A quick update from the group: Coming out of a December meeting with the YMCA CEO and several Executive Board members, the YMCA has asked the Friends of Minikani to engage in a handful of planning sessions between now and April. The goal is to identify potential structural changes to address the concerns shared with the YMCA leadership team and Board based on, among other sources, the alumni survey from summer 2020. The group has agreed to engage in these discussions in order to give both groups the opportunity to come to the table ready to make meaningful change to provide a more sustainable future for our Summer Homeland. While the group and many alumni have expressed an eagerness to see change, the Friends of Minikani is remaining patient and respectful of the YMCA's willingness to collaborate and looks forward to sharing updates as the conversations develop.

For those who want to be included on more detailed and frequent updates from the Friends of Minikani, please email thefriendsofminikani@gmail.com.

*Friends of Minikani core group includes: Kevin Casper, Jim Flint, Jen (Feltz) Hense, Shane Judd, Jerry King, Perry LaRoque, Jenny Risch & Jeremy Welland 



Minikani's LT Program started in 1971 and is celebrating its 50th Anniversary this year. Can you spot a recent Minikani Advisory Board Chairperson in this photo?

Polar Plungers

We started planning last August. A subgroup of the MAC Board of Directors met to solve a common 2020 riddle: How can we continue our tradition of having a MAC Holiday Gala in the midst of the COVID pandemic? We wanted to get alumni ‘together’ in the spirit of Minikani, yet we didn’t want the typical “Zoom” meeting.

So, being Minikani alumni, we went back to our camp roots. Someone suggested an activity like the popular “Kangaroo Courts” we had at campfires. We could get people together to see counselors do silly things. The idea then evolved from silly challenges to asking volunteers to take a “Polar Plunge” in a body of water of their choice.

A key part of the annual Holiday party has always been raising money for our Campership kids. Somehow we merged “silly things” with a “silent auction” and out came our Campership Challenge: Ask our members for donations.

With lots of energy and work put into promotion, the MAC is pleased to report that over \$5,000 was generously donated to help us get kids to camp in 2021. On December 19th there was a short Zoom campfire with music (thanks to Will Caster, Heather Ullsvik Loomans, and Grace Weber) and the announcement of the Polar Plunge ‘winners’. If you’re interested, you’ll be able to see videos of our winning “Plungers” as they are posted on our Facebook Group through the month of January. A great “Thanks” to everyone who made the 2020 Holiday Gala a roaring success.



Myles Hayes



Joe Alioto



The Van Sicklens each jumped into the lake below:



	DONATIONS	REVISED DONATIONS
Bruce Rasmussen	\$ 784.0	\$ 784
Ryan Derus	629	629
The Van Sicklens	527	527
Hillary Lobenstein	446	446
Joe Alioto	392	392
Matt Kolb	373	373
Perry LaRoque	259	259
Austin Cox	232	259
Myles Hayes	130	259
Will Caster	130	259
Molly Knutsen	123	259
Gordy Goetz	84	259
Haley Adams	68	259
David Demet	48	96
Unassigned donations	\$ 836	\$ -
Total	\$ 5,059	\$ 5,059

Everyone above this line plunges

The Gift of Camp

Editor's Note:

Here's the story of two girls and a family that absolutely fell in love with Minikani. Thanks to Megan White who passed this information on to the Newsletter.

We loved our family day at camp for the 100th anniversary celebration. After our amazing day together the girls (Harper, 8 and Quinn, 11) called a "family meeting" and asked if they could attend overnight camp next summer.

My husband and I were really honest with them. We explained that although we'd love to provide that experience, we simply couldn't afford it. The amount of money we would spend on sending them each to one week of overnight camp and one week of day camp, was almost equal to what we'd spend in child care & camps for the entire summer.

Well, they put their heads together and a few days later asked if they could "get Minikani for Christmas!" Quinn explained that they could ask uncles, aunts, friends, and grandparents for the gift of sending them to camp instead of other gifts.

The girls were insistent. They wrote the attached letter and sent it along with the attached photo collage to our family and friends in mid-November 2019. They were SO proud. Brian and I were SO proud.

I'm happy to report they raised \$800, almost enough for one full week! That was amazing! And it



Dear Family,

If you are considering giving us a Christmas present this year, we'd like you to think about helping us get to Camp Minikani for a 1-week stay, as our gift instead. For the past couple of years we have been going to Day Camp, but we know we're ready to try a week of adventures at overnight camp.

Camp Minikani is a very fun place to be at for the week! We get to ride horses, swim, boat, paddleboard, archery, feed chickens, Wilderness survival skills, and create on the rock'n craft porch with cool counselors. The Spirit of Minikani has taught us so many new skills and things we've never tried before (like climbing a ropes course) while making new friends.

It would mean so much to us if you'd help us with any donations to get us to our dream week on Lake Amy Belle this August!

In the Spirit,
Quinn (11) & Harper (8)

allowed us as a family to pay for the girls to attend one week of day camp, and one week of overnight. Their dream was on the way to coming true!

Sadly, 2020 did not yield this experience for my girls; however, we're still hopeful for next summer (2021) and believe it'll be well-worth the wait.

There is something about Minikani that stole our hearts the first year Quinn attended. At our

house, it's known as "Minikani Magic" during the weeks that my daughters attend. There is magic in the mud, the ropes course, and the survival skills they learn. And as a parent, I see the confidence that the time at camp instills in my girls and I know that is priceless.

Sincerely,
Donna & Brian Pierquet



5 Helpful Tips

Being a summer camp counselor isn't all fun and games. To be a truly great camp counselor you need to have a specific set of skills that allows you to create a fun, safe, and memorable time for campers. As we all know, developing and employing that skillset every day for an entire summer is hard work!

Here is a short article I have adapted from *The Camp Experts & Teen Summers*. They give 5 helpful tips to being a great summer camp counselor. I've added a short paragraph to each one to show that most of the same 'tips' can be applied to your adult life. Using the skills you learned as a counselor should help you as an adult today. Alumni may find these 'tips' helpful in their present 'jobs' as successful salespersons, teachers, managers, parents, neighbors, administrators, coaches, citizens, etc.

1. Get to know your campers quickly. Since most of your campers will only be at camp for a week or two, it's important to get to know them quickly. It helps to repeat their names that first day. It also helps to chat with each one individually to learn more about their interests and their lives, and then use these 'tidbits' in future conversations.

As adults we are always dealing with others, and it helps to get to know those people quickly. Get to know your customers, neighbors, co-workers, etc. quickly. You don't have to be an extrovert to remember someone's name or what football team they like best.

2. Establish boundaries from the get-go. Get off to a good start.



Set out some simple rules with your campers right away. We're not talking about a long list here, just let them know what behavior is expected of them. It also helps to make the consequences of breaking the rules clear from the start.

As adults, we know how we want to be treated, and it will help to let others know right away what they are. If you don't like the direction a relationship is going, say something right away to prevent problems from developing later.

3. Rely on others to help you. Get to know the other counselors. Reach out to them if you need help. If you feel you're about to lose it, take a break and ask them what they would do in the same situation. You can learn a lot from other counseling styles. Help is out there – but you'll have to ask for it.

As an adult, you probably still don't have all the answers. Talking with someone close to you may help. They may have a better perspective on a situation and be able to give

you some good advice. Having a 'mentor' you can share with can both help you and the mentor.

4. Act the way you want them to act. You are a role model for your campers. If you yell, they will too. If you're having fun, they will too. If you're interested, they will be too. If you are respectful, they will be too. If you make a mistake, apologize and move on.

As adults, we have lots of ways to do the right thing and model good behavior. Others appreciate that you are doing 'right' thing. If you lie and cheat, others may do the same. Be kind to yourself and others will be kind too.

5. Take care of yourself. As a summer camp counselor, you will be working 24/7. Be aware of your physical, mental, and emotional needs. Try to include some quiet time in your day. Try to get a good night's sleep. Eat well and stay hydrated. If you're not having fun, your campers won't either.

The exact same things apply to you as an adult. "Take Care" means just that. And don't forget the part about having fun ☺

To see the full article, click [HERE](#)



Can you recommend a person for the "Spotlight on Alumni"? Have Minikani Memory to share? Comments or ideas about the Newsletter? Contact us here:

Email
minikanistafflodge@gmail.com

Website
www.minikanistafflodge.com

Facebook
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/28911858611>

SpotLight

On Alumni

By Emily Mazzulla

I asked Emily to shine the “Spotlight” on herself about her experiences at Minikani. She had no trouble picking a favorite place (the old 1/2 rafter corral) and for a favorite food she asked me “Who doesn’t love cinnamon rolls for breakfast?” Here is the rest of her “Spotlight”:

◆ **What is your history at camp?**

I was a 2nd grade student at University School of Milwaukee when our class did a “sleep-over” at Camp Minikani. I remember coming back from that overnight thinking that I really wanted to return to experience camp in the summertime. I convinced my older sister, Francesca, to come with me and we were put in the same cabin, cabin 5, with Amy Dowd (now Amy Maxwell) as our counselor.



This was the summer of 1991 and we were there for the infamous Minikani windstorm. I still have

Drew Maxwell’s original art on a t-shirt to prove it ☺. I think Mary O’Malley was in that cabin too? (Mary O’Malley and Colleen Leadley -now Colleen Kelley- went to Minikani overnight programming together many summers and also did expeditions like our trip to the Porcupine Mountains)-then later we were LTs and counselors together. I think my last summer was 2003?).

My sister did not return to camp after that exciting week, but I was hooked and couldn’t get enough. I ended up going to camp every summer and also did a bunch of expeditions when my two weeks of camp were over. I remember coming and going from those expeditions feeling restless that I wasn’t part of the action at Minikani, but of course loved the outdoor hiking, backpacking, canoeing, rock-climbing aspects that the expeditions brought. From these expeditions, I got really into being immersed in nature, feeling connected to the energy of being outdoors and away from the day-to-day pressures.

I ended up seeking programming at other summer camps too, like a two-week boundary water trip out of Camp Menogyn in northern Minnesota. But no matter where I went, nothing *felt* like Minikani or the Minikani community. As those of us know who have moved around to different parts of the world, there is no-place like home. Minikani was my summer homeland for many years. I truly couldn’t get enough of Minikani. I felt very connected to the place and to the people.

◆ **Did you have a favorite “job”?**

I loved being an explorer counselor because I got to show kids how powerful connecting with nature can be and how “burly” they



could be (this was the word we used to describe ourselves as Explorers). These trips were not the most hardcore, but we taught kids to use their strengths, to tolerate being out of their comfort zones, and to do tough things. (Ha ha-I sound like a Psychologist, don’t I??)

I love the adventure of a backpacking or canoeing excursion and still do to this day! However, there was always the pull of the Minikani campus in Hubertus so it was exhilarating coming back into camp in our 15 passenger vans, pumping some early 2000’s tunes and honking our horns. That was fun.

I also loved being the corral LT3 with Christine Bremner (now Welland) as the wrangler. We had a great time listening to music (a lot of Ani DiFranco and Phish), talking about life, and keeping up with the unpredictable horses. When I look back, I marvel at how many times we had to rescue campers from ½ rafter trail rides. That would never happen today!!

◆ **Any special skills you learned?**

I learned how to be a good friend at Minikani. I also learned leadership skills and confidence to implement those skills in pretty much any arena. I also pull out some creative parenting inspired by my Minikani days.

Just this morning, my kids needed to get into their ski gear and out of the house but weren't cooperating-like at all. Of course, I turned it into a classic Norris Field game! I had them lay out all of their gear (five items-hat, mittens, snow-pants, jacket, boots) and take turns getting dressed after 10 spins in place as fast as they could. My son, James (7) was super dizzy and giggling and did it in 58 seconds. My daughter, Georgia (5), wasn't dizzy at all and did it in 1:07 seconds. We weighted her score based on her age down to 58 seconds for the tie ☺



◆ **What song always makes you think of camp?**

Many songs come to mind. The most memorable is "Fast Car" by Tracy Chapman which was played on our way up to the Porcupine Mountains backpacking trip and on the way back to camp on repeat. Mary O'Malley, Colleen Leadley and I made up a few choreographed moves that sometimes surface on our yearly girls' weekends that we have been doing with Jenny Risch since our camp days. Lots and lots of giggles. We are hilarious.

◆ **You have recently written a children's book – this makes your life's list of accomplishments and successes even longer than before.**

I have been very fortunate to be given myriad opportunities in my life and I have tried to take advantage of many if not all of them. I am inspired by the creativity and accomplishments of others and feel grateful to have had many mentors who have encouraged me along the way. I try to be present and tuned into my surroundings and plug in where I think I can be of service.

As a clinical psychologist and professor, my research and clinical work has been in trauma and resilience, specifically in re-settled refugee communities. When the pandemic hit, I worked to provide coping and resilience strategies to local communities hardest hit and with the fewest resources.

As the national narrative turned to bringing kids back into the classroom, the discussion centered on the physical safety of kids and protocols to keep kids safe. Of course, these are the obvious and very important priorities, however, what was missing from the narrative was care for the social and emotional health of kids. Almost every aspect of their "normal" lives had been impacted.

Adults all around them were hyper-focused on this virus, and kids are powerless in a way, because they did not have decision making power. As a clinical psychologist, with my specific specialty, I thought I had something to offer that might help kids and their family's transition back to in-person learning and build resilience along the way.

My book, *School in the Time of the Coronavirus*, is about Maria, a little girl who is worried about what school will be like after being at



home for so long and with COVID still in the community.

Throughout the story, Maria and her mother discuss her thoughts and feelings and also ways that she can manage the transition effectively. At the end of the book, I provide nine resilience-building coping strategies for kids, parents, and teachers to practice.

The main gist of the story is that adults are doing everything they can to keep kids safe and that with support, kids can do difficult things. It is also about kids making choices to help themselves-empowering kids. As a mother of three kids, two of whom are school aged, I wanted to provide a message of hope and strength to other parents out there doing their best in unprecedented times.

◆ **Anything else to share?**

Taking initiative in all settings - home, work, and play is something I think about a lot. Usually, once I get going, I end up enjoying most of what the day brings, no matter the task. Rarely do I regret giving something my all.



Nature Notes

By Bruce

Bacteria are very important in nature. They are continually working for us in the soil. These decomposers break down material from all of the dead plants and animals. This might sound kind of gross, but it's an important function that helps to make more soil and get rid of dead things. Imagine what a walk in the woods would be like with piles and piles of dead plants and animals all around. Without these decomposers, much natural recycling would come to a halt.



Another group of bacteria found in nature can take nitrogen gas right out of the air (our atmosphere is about 78% N₂ and 21% O₂) and turn it into nitrogen compounds that can be used as fertilizer for plants.

Still other bacteria, along with yeasts and molds, are used to make food products such as bread, beer, wine, vinegar, yogurt and cheese. Where would Wisconsin be without beer and cheese? We even rely on bacteria lining in our gut to help with the digestion of our food. It's easy to say that without bacteria, life on Earth as we know it would be very different.

Pathogens make us sick. Bacteria, fungi, protozoa, worms and viruses are all pathogens. These things can invade our bodies, initiate an immune response, and make us sick. But here's the thing: all bacteria aren't pathogens. Some scientists say that only 1% of all bacteria can make people sick.

Thinking that all bacteria are bad is like thinking that all people are bad. Sure, there are some people you have to watch out for, but the great majority aren't bad. Are all fish bad? Well, you have to watch out for the occasional shark or piranha, but most fish just go about their business and never hurt people.

It's easy for people to confuse different pathogens. Bacteria are small – they can barely be seen with a classroom microscope. Just so you know, viruses are even smaller. The largest virus is smaller than the smallest bacterium. If a bacterium were the size of a human, a typical virus particle would look like a tiny mouse-robot. If an average virus were the size of a human, a bacterium would be the size of a dinosaur over ten stories tall.

OK, so there are some bacteria that cause problems in humans by either evading the body's defense mechanisms (tuberculosis, pneumonia, typhus) or producing toxins that cause symptoms and disease (botulism, tetanus). As living things, bacteria can grow and reproduce right inside our bodies. In the early 1900's, pneumonia, tuberculosis and diarrhea were the top three leading causes of death in the US. Water purification, vaccinations and antibiotic treatment have reduced the death rates from bacterial disease in the 21st Century.



Fun Bacteria Facts

- ◆ All of the bacteria in our body (39 trillion bacterial cells) collectively accounts for about 1 - 2% of our weight.
- ◆ There're more bacteria in your mouth right now than there are people living in the world.
- ◆ Mobile phones have 18 times more bacteria than toilet handles.



- ◆ Babies are born with no bacteria in their bodies.
- ◆ Eating beans increases flatulence because they carry a type of sugar called "oligosaccharides", which are hard for bacteria to break down, so they release gas in the process.
- ◆ Whipping their tails, *E.coli* bacteria can travel 25 times their own length in 1 second, equivalent to a horse running 135 miles per hour.
- ◆ Probiotics are live bacteria and yeasts that are good for you, especially your digestive system.
- ◆ Scientists have found nearly 4,000 different species of bacteria in human bellybuttons alone.
- ◆ If you lined up all of earth's bacteria end to end, they would stretch some 10 billion light-years.