



# NEWSLETTER

# 2023

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Thanks To: Alex Hushek, Bailey Foster, Nallely Torres, David Van Sicklen and Hillary Phelps Lobenstein

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### What's in a name?

This past summer I received an invitation to join a ragger ceremony on "Nail Hill – formerly Indian Hill." I realize that camp has the right to name its own things, but I was curious to learn what prompted the name change to 'Nail'.

Camp names change all the time. Back in the 70's and 80's you could plan to meet someone at Hueniker Hill, Skunk Hill, Slippery Hill, or Sycafus Hill. To get there you could use the Deer Path Trail or the Tamarack Trail. You might also have met at Firebackside, the Chatterbox, Obstacle Course, the Gremlin Grounds, or even Sleepy Hollow.

Some places have the same name today as back then, only now they're found in different parts of camp, like the Office, Corral, Maintenance, and the Camp Store. Some camp names may never see a change. Minikani, Lake Amy Belle, Council Bluff, and Pine Forest are probably here to stay – but who knows?

Why the Nail Hill change? It turns out that the name change was an accident that stuck. About 5 years ago an Eagle Scout was given a hand written list of the various campsites at camp so he could make 'official' signs. It wasn't until later that people realized that he had misread the list and created the Nail Hill sign. So now everyone calls that hill by a new name!





# New Ropes Course

By Alex Hushek

We heard that Stevie Wonder’s song "Isn't She Lovely" was actually written after he had a dream about the ropes course we would someday build at Minikani. Needless to say, the new course is living up to the hype!

With 15 new elements and two levels, our campers can test their limits by trying the most challenging aspects, or perfecting their balance by traversing across sturdier routes. Even if a camper is afraid of heights but wants to challenge them self, we've got routes of all difficulties on the top and lower levels. We can't wait for our campers to master the new course this summer!

The new ropes course was “designed” by Bailey Foster, Minikani’s new Director of Education and Conferences. As an introduction to the MAC, we asked Bailey to tell us a little bit about herself:

## Bailey Foster

Hi! My name is Bailey Foster, the new Director of Education and Conferences here at Minikani and I am so excited to be joining you all in continuing the impact that Minikani can bring to people. I have previously been a part of 5 very special summers and 2 seasons as a Counselor, Waterfront Director, Outdoor Ed Instructor, and even Summer Director at YMCA Camp U-Nah-Li-Ya.



My time at camp propelled me to my studies in Environmental Education and Interpretation at UW-Stevens Point, which I feel very lucky to continue to do here at Minikani as I help groups and classes to receive the camp spirit in the other seasons of the year. I also get the amazing opportunity to live on camp, and I have loved catching the view of Amy Belle each morning since August (the Sandhill Cranes might be a close second).

Connecting people with the outdoors is the best job I could ever ask for, and I am very much looking forward to making new connections and camp magic here at Minikani this summer. Catch me at AC on the brand-new High Ropes course all summer long!

Thank you to everyone I have met so far, who have helped make my first few months here at Minikani so warm, welcoming, and very bright!



# Leadership

## Leadership Training at Minikani

First a little history: Minikani’s Camp Directors realized in the early 1950’s that there would be a benefit to having an “Alumni Program” made up of boys who had been previous campers return as “Junior Counselors” the next summer and work with counselors. However, it wasn’t until the late 1960’s that the idea was put into action and they became “Junior Counselors” who worked under the direction of Chris Ladwig in 1966. By 1971 the camp was co-ed and the Junior Counselors were renamed the “Leadership Training Program”. Bruce Rasmussen was selected to lead the boys, living out of Cabin 18, and Aimee (Mozuch) Grizwold would lead the girls from Cabin 19.



Why the name change? (See “What’s in a name?” on page 1) Other camps used the term “Junior Counselor” or “CIT” for Counselor in Training for these former campers who were too young to be on staff. Program Director Lloyd LaRoque wanted to make the program be more than just “junior” counselors in the summer. He and Camp Director Don Nordahl envisioned a year-round program that would actually train teenagers in leadership skills. With both a Fall Training Weekend and another weekend in the spring, former campers were trained with a variety of activities. To become an LT, campers had to be nominated by the Explorer counselors, with only the best campers allowed to join the three year program.

Back then Fireside Lodge was where the Dining Hall and Kitchen were located. LT waiters ate their meals before everyone else in the small room off the main room now called the “Log Roller’s Den”, and LT’s washed all the dishes and swept the floors after every meal. They helped with morning skills and were the “counselors” for the brand new program, MiniKamp, with 4-7 year old kids from the area. After the evening activity they joined a cabin for vespers, grabbed a quick snack at the Staff Lodge and headed back to their cabin for a well-deserved night of sleep.



In 1975 Camp Director Stew Brown wrote “One of the greatest assets of the camp is its ability to continue adding to the growth of the camp by supporting the excellent Leadership Training Program. It is outstanding in preparing young people for staff assignments, instilling in them the skills, abilities, faith and spirit required of the Minikani Staff.”

For over 50 years the LT Program has continued to develop leadership skills in former campers. In 1981 the LT’s were moved to the newly built Kossow Lodge and later on to Halquist Lodge. Each year camp’s finest male and female counselors were chosen to direct the Leadership. Probably most of you reading this article have benefitted from Minikani’s three year Leadership Training Program. The

program has doubled in size and Minikani continues today to list the following three goals:

1. To instill a commitment to YMCA core values and a service toward others.
2. To develop leadership skills such as respect, responsibility, communication, and decision making, all in an outdoor setting, at Minikani and within the community.
3. To create a well-trained group of young adults committed to leadership and helping others.



### Leadership Quotes

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.” *John Quincy Adams*

“Leadership is not wielding authority — it’s empowering people” *Becky Brodin*

“Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.” *John F. Kennedy*

“Leadership is unlocking people’s potential to become better.” *Bill Bradley*

“I don’t know any other way to lead but by example.” *Don Shula*

“The definition of leadership is to influence, inspire and help others become their best selves, building their skills and achieving goals along the way.” *Tony Robbins*

## Nallely Torres LTI

By Nallely Torres

Hello everyone, my name is Nallely Torres. I am fifteen years old and currently a sophomore at Von Steuben H.S. in Chicago. One of my favorite things to do is play my trumpet. I am part of the pep band at school and have been playing for 9 years outside with an organization known as The Peoples Music School. I also enjoy volunteering at the Field Museum of Chicago, engaging with visitors and teaching them about exhibits throughout the museum.

I have been part of Minikani as a camper for the past four years. Being a camper at Minikani was a great experience. I had the opportunity to meet many different people and get to know them and their lifestyles. Being away from home for an extended amount of time and away from my family was a totally new experience for me at the time. Everyone at camp was very welcoming which made me feel great and motivated me to go out and try something new.

I've had many memorable moments over the years – from learning about wilderness survival to horseback riding, swimming in Lake Amy Belle, and going on Explorer trips with our counselors and other campers. The most important thing was the bond that we created with each other and how the spirit of Minikani brought us together.

As a new member of the LT program I hope to share my experiences with new campers and teach them about the many different people they will meet and how they can all come together to learn about their different customs and lifestyles.



## MAC Campership Program

Any Minikani alumnus can recommend a child to be part of this program. They can do so by writing a brief statement about why this child is deserving of financial assistance and would benefit from the MAC Campership Program and sending it to the MAC board.



## Minikani Family Camp - Memorial Day

Sorry, but Family Camp over Memorial Day at Minikani is already booked up. Perhaps last January's article about all the great things about Family Camp went to heart and families signed up early.

Like other camp registration, they are keeping a "Waiting List" for the Family Camp in the office (262) 251-9080.



Nallely (far right) with other campers 2016

# MINIKANI ALUMNI NEWS

## Winter Gala 2022

By David Van Sicklen

We can't thank this incredible community enough for helping make this year's MAC Winter Gala such a successful and fun night. Despite Mother Nature's sincerest attempt to derail the event with winter weather, we had a great turnout with over 75 alumni and friends showing up to show their love for Mama Minikani. Third Space Brewing once again provided the perfect venue for our alumni to connect, love, laugh, and lift together over delicious drinks and snacks.

Between tickets, auction items and generous donations our community raised over \$2,800 with each dollar going directly towards sending kids to camp via Camperships. If you were unable to attend, but would still like to help send kids to camp, please follow this [link](#) to our site!

We are so proud of this community and its continued support. We look forward to next year's Gala, and connecting again soon during "Minikani Around the World" during the first weekend of March!




## Winter Camp 2022

We had a wonderful first day of Winter Camp. Snow gave our campers and counselors new twists on classic games, beautiful scenic hikes, and crazy Wintery theme days. At Sunburst we had a legendary tailgate and such a great time skiing, snowboarding, and tubing! On the Last night we had the infamous New Year's Eve Eve Party. Minikani was so cozy!



**Camp Minikani Song Book**



**Minikani Alumni Community 2021**

[www.minikanistafflodge.com](http://www.minikanistafflodge.com)



Fall Weekend with LT I, II, and III's in Halquist. How many LT's were there when you were an LT?

# SpotLight On Alumni

## Hillary Phelps Lobenstein

### ◆ What is your history at Camp?

I first attended Camp Minikani in 1988 with my friend Julie Gremmels. We were 12 years old. We were introduced to camp by Brooke Nustad, Dana Nustad, and Heather Ullsvik. We all grew up in Watertown. I was an Explorer in the summers of 1989 and 1990. I had two legendary counselors when I was an Explorer: Julie Johnston Herschede and Susan Andersen LaRoque.



Explorer Staff 1996

As a camper, I loved archery. I had never tried it before, and I always signed up for it. As an LT3 and counselor, I was on the corral staff from 1993 to 1996. Then, I was Nature & Minikamp Director in 1997 and 1998, so I also spent time on nature staff. My last camp years I was an Expedition counselor.

### ◆ Did you have a favorite “job” at camp?

There’s so many jobs that come to mind. I remember cleaning up for white glove check as a camper,

washing dishes with my LT friends, searching for wood for the campfire. I loved serving meals as an LT, except the time I accidentally spilled food on John Huber (that was horrifying).

By far, my favorite job was being an Expedition counselor. From 1999 to 2001, it was the most rewarding job I ever had at camp. I loved taking older campers to incredible places. I was able to travel to the Boundary Waters in Minnesota, the Wind River Wilderness in Wyoming, the Rocky Mountains in Colorado, the Snake River in Wyoming, Isle Royale National Park, and Lake Superior.

### ◆ What song makes you think of camp?

The entire Counting Crows album, *August and Everything After*, was played on many mornings by the corral staff while we were grooming and saddling horses. I can still imagine myself there in the stalls working on the horses as we listened to that album.

There are so many musicians that remind me of camp: Dar Williams, Tori Amos, Lyle Lovett, Beastie Boys, Grateful Dead, John Prine, Talking Heads, and Indigo Girls. I remember spending time with Kelsey McCourt and Neelie Barthenheier listening to life altering female musicians together as first year Ad Staff members in 1997.

### ◆ Which did you like best – Opening Day or Closing Day?

Opening Day, of course! The first session is usually around the time of the summer solstice. I love the beginning of each summer—each day with so much sunlight, with its full potential of learning a new skill and meeting more friends.



Hillary & Audra at Mud Lake 2017

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

I learned to push myself more than I had before. Being an LT was such a challenge. I learned that it was acceptable to be challenged. Honestly, I was afraid of horses before I started on corral staff. When I was put into the corral staff, all I could do was deal with it and face my fear. I learned the power of being my true authentic self at camp. No one else is like you. I learned all about taking initiative, leading by example, using my leadership skills to start something new. I use those skills daily as a high school teacher. So much of my day to day interaction with students depends on my interpersonal skills, and I honed those skills at camp.



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I also learned a love of the outdoors and camping through Minikani. From my experience on Explorer and Expedition staff, I learned new skills and was able to travel beyond camp. Because of the encouragement of fellow Expedition staff (specifically Jenn Drake and David Braun), I spent a semester at NOLS in the Rocky Mountains. From there, I went on to be a whitewater rafting guide for the NOC in North Carolina and Tennessee for many summers.

◆ **Do you have a place at camp that is special to you?**

Pine Forest is my special place at camp. I love walking down from Explorer Hill. My favorite cabin activity of the week was Monday afternoon Capture the Flag that started at 2:30 pm sharp in Pine Forest. I loved running around and jumping over logs, trying to get kids out of jail, attempting to capture the flag. I loved leading kids on missions during the game, getting them actively involved in the game.

◆ **If you could go back in time and relive just THREE Special Day or Camp Activity, what would that be?**

**ONE:** I clearly remember being at camp on my very first day on June 26, 1988. I remember being on the tennis courts for a camp dance. I clearly remember thinking, “Wow, I want to be here forever. I love this place.” I don’t know if I knew I wanted to be an LT or a counselor at that very moment, but it still is a clear and focused memory from my childhood.

**TWO:** Working with Myles Hayes is another favorite memory. For some reason, Myles and I went through camp with the same progression. (Even though his older brother, Hogan, was in my LT

group.) We were on corral staff together. Then, we were on nature staff together. Then, we were Expedition counselors together. We took a group of expedition counselors in training out to Wyoming and the Snake River. From locking the keys in a 15 passenger van at the Badlands National Park to the call of “Myles, Hug the Tree!” at Council Bluff to listening to the Talking Heads while driving on a Wyoming highway early in the morning, we have had so many Minikani adventures together. Myles is my brother from Minikani.



**Myles at Alumni Weekend 2022**

**THREE:** Finally, the experience of taking my White Rag with my friends, Keri Robertson and Hogan Hayes. It was a deep and moving experience, a life altering experience.

◆ **You have certainly brought up your son and daughter to love Minikani. Can you tell us a little about that?**

Grady started attending camp in 2016 when he was 7 years old for the half week session. Our daughter Audra started attending camp in 2021 when she was 12 years old. She was apprehensive to go away for a week, so I waited until she was ready. We have invited their friends to attend camp, so we



**Grady & Audra at Alumni Weekend 2013**

have a group of Minikani campers from Sun Prairie and Cottage Grove. Grady and Audra will both be Explorer campers this summer. I can’t wait to hear all about their adventures!

◆ **Anything else to share?**

Beside the ever present influence of my parents—Randy and Barb Phelps, Minikani has deeply changed and influenced my life for the better.

Here’s my Minikani checklist:

- ✓ Confidence
- ✓ Taking initiative
- ✓ Leading by example
- ✓ How to struggle with adversity
- ✓ How to take risks
- ✓ Learning new skills
- ✓ Deep and lifelong friends
- ✓ Laughter and love





# Nature Notes

By Bruce

What is a weed? It's difficult to get a definition that doesn't come with a negative connotation. Wikipedia says "A weed is a plant considered undesirable in a particular situation, 'a plant in the wrong place', or a plant growing where it is not wanted." Webster says "A weed is a plant that is not valued where it is growing."

Like many plants, you can eat some weeds. Early colonists and pioneers looked forward to eating weeds after a long winter without any fresh greens. Back when vitamin pills were unknown, vitamin deficiencies killed millions. It is said that in its time, "Scurvy" was as dreaded a word as AIDS is today. Dandelions probably arrived in North America on the Mayflower – not as stowaways, but brought on purpose for their medicinal benefits. Dandelions have more vitamin A than spinach, more vitamin C than tomatoes, and are a powerhouse of iron, calcium and potassium.

Other edible weeds include purslane, wood sorrel, curly dock, lamb's quarters, chickweed, plantain, garlic mustard and violets – Wisconsin's state flower. I've seen all of these plants growing at Minikani, and I'd bet that you could find some of them right in your own neighborhood. Of course, with any wild food you plan to eat it's best to get a positive ID and wash any chemicals and dirt off before consuming them.

If you don't plan to start eating weeds right now, at least you can think of the benefit these plants bring to your garden. Weeds are fast growing, so they can quickly



cover bare ground and protect it. Their roots hold soil together and keep it from eroding away in the wind or rain. Decaying roots add organic matter to the soil. They provide channels for rain and air to penetrate. Decaying roots also create tunnels for worms and other beneficial soil microbes.

Certainly one of the most beloved/hated weeds is the dandelion. The name dandelion is taken from the French word "dent de lion" meaning lion's tooth, referring to the coarsely-toothed leaves. Its scientific name (*Taraxacum officinale*), refers to its use as a 'healer'. A perennial from the sunflower family, it is native to Europe and Asia.

Dandelions have sunk their roots deep into history. They were well known to ancient Egyptians, Greeks and Romans, and have been used in

Chinese traditional medicine for over a thousand years. With their golden flowers in the early spring, dandelions represent the return of life, the rebirth of growth and green after a harsh winter, and a display of abundant strength and power.

Humans are not the only ones that appreciate dandelions. Birds, insects and butterflies consume their nectar and seeds. Leaves, stems, seeds, and flowers are regularly found in grizzly and black bear poop. Deer, elk, grouse, sheep, and gophers are also consumers.

The dandelion flower opens to greet the morning and closes in the evening to go to sleep. It is the only flower that represents the 3 celestial bodies of the sun, moon and stars. The yellow flower resembles the sun, the puff ball resembles the moon and the dispersing seeds resemble all the stars.

