



NEWSLETTER

May 2021
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Thanks To: Eli Fyksen, Grace Weber, Travis King and Rachel Kornetsky

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“Down in the shady woodland
Where fern fronds are uncurled
A host of green umbrellas
Are swiftly now unfurled.”

Minnie Curtis Wait

Mayapples do, indeed, pop up their little umbrellas by the hundreds in the woodlands of our dear ‘ole camp. In early spring these umbrellas quickly open up into tall (12 to 18 inch) plants that can blanket the entire patch of ground.

What starts as a vacant and seemingly dead leafy patch comes alive with bright green life, completely taking over the area.

Likewise, Minikani will soon come alive with new life. This summer hundreds of kids (and staff) will be able to have some of the best experiences of their lives.

By the way, mayapples spread by rhizomes, which are underground stems. Over years these slow-growing mayapples can form massive colonies, sometimes living as long as 100 years. Coincidence? Perhaps.

Anyway, here’s to a safe and joyous return to overnight summer camping at Minikani for the summer of 2021.



CAMP NEWS

Minikani 2021

We are so excited to be returning to a summer of overnight camp! Due to COVID-19, we will be making a number of adjustments to camp to ensure that everyone stays safe and healthy. For example, cabins will belong to a cohort of 2-3 other cabins. These cohorts will get to sign up for skills together, eat near one another, and participate in all of the fun that Minikani has to offer together.

In order to minimize the spread of germs, all of camp will also be eating underneath a tent outdoors – we’re excited to still be able to participate in our favorite tradition of singing songs together after dinner and showing off our unit cheers!

And while we’ll need to wear masks and maintain some physical distance, we cannot wait to join together for our opening and closing campfires. While camp may look a bit different this summer, we know that the same magic and spirit will feel as powerful as ever.

Rachel Kornetsky
Summer Camp Director



DEI Progress

The camp leadership team has continued to make a commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Our Social Responsibility Committee has been working to address and create action plans for ways that we as a camp community can learn and create more equitable policies and practices.

As an example, we have recently posted a “Camp Diversity Specialist” position that will allow us to better recruit, serve, and create a sense of belonging for BIPOC campers, LTs, and staff. We are only in the beginning of this journey but are eager to continue to move forward with this process and do our part to create a just and equitable community for all.



It’s Official

Congratulations to Eli Fyksen. He was recently appointed Minikani’s Executive Director by the Milwaukee YMCA.

You can get to know more about Eli and his history at Minikani by turning to page 6 of this Newsletter. See the “Spotlight on Alumni” article which features Eli.



Summer Ad Staff 2021

- Assistant Summer Camp Director:**
Gabby Oliveras-Bonaparte
- Trips and Leadership Director:**
Darby O’Connor
- Explorer Unit Directors:**
Sam Nord, Joey Rampolla, Erica Kalberer
- Boys Unit Director:**
Chris Malicky
- Girls Unit Director:**
Olivia Holbrook
- Minicamp Director:**
Abby Friedlen
- Day Camp Directors:**
Jess Eiler
- LT Directors:**
Jane Hudson, Sam James, Sam Judd, Chris MacDonald, Mike Devine
- Flex Director:**
Alex Hushek
- Waterfront Director:**
Maggie Kosterman
- WSA:**
Hailey Collins
- AC Directors:**
Robby Gral, Max Kroft
- Gun and Run:**
Sarah Bachmann
- Crafts Director:**
Sheila Collins
- Wranglers:**
Aidan LaRoque, Josie Morkin



Spring Workday

Hey Alumni -

It's not too late to help out Minikani and plan to attend the Alumni Workday on May 22nd. Our camp hasn't been open for a year, so let's help get the 'ole place back up and into shape for this summer!!! Can you be there?

Who: Any friends, family and members of the Minikani Alumni Community

Where: Our Summer Homeland, Camp Minikani

When: Saturday, May 22nd; 9:30AM-3:30PM with a BBQ lunch hosted by the Minikani Advisory Board

Important notes: Dress for the weather (this is rain or shine!) Also, bring a swimsuit (for dock work) and work gloves!

Share in this opportunity to give back to camp and join us for a barbecue and celebration of a job well done. In order for this to be a success we need as many alumni as possible! Make your connection to camp count.

If you have any questions reach out to your friendly MAC Directors, David and Kendall!

dbvansicklen@gmail.com

dowsett4@gmail.com

All you have to do now is RSVP and let us know you're coming.

Please RSVP Here!



Grace Weber's New Single



Los Angeles based singer-songwriter Grace Weber has shared the gospel-inspired "Thru The Fire," which features a fresh verse from Chance the Rapper. Grace was a camper at Minikani the summers of 2001 and 2002, went through the LT program 2003-2005, and was a girl's unit counselor 2006-2007.

She recently sent out a newsletter all about her new single and has given us permission to include the article (below) in our Newsletter.

Hey!!

My new single, [Thru The Fire](#) is out now, and it features my friend & one of my favorite artists, Chance the Rapper!!!

I couldn't be more excited for this song to be out in the world. *Thru The Fire* is about resilience and using the fire within you to make it through anything, no matter how hard the world or life is bearing down on you. When Chance put his verse on this, everything came

together and it all honestly felt magical.

My favorite line of his verse is, 'I don't know defeat.' I went through some wild things the past couple of years and his verse helped pull me out of a low place; & the song became my pump-up, comeback, Rocky-running-up-the-steps moment. I'm super grateful to Chance for helping me out of a low place with his verse, & I hope the song can do that for anyone who needs it.

Thank you for streaming and for all the love on this one, we're already at over 500k streams!! SO WILD!!!

Listen [here](#) and text me what you think: +1 (414) 928-7853.

Thank you again for your support - I couldn't do this without you <3.

Love, Grace



Travis King's Book

Travis King has written a book. *Not That Anyone Asked – A Travel Memoir*. Travis is a Minikani alumnus who was featured in a 'Spotlight' article in the May 2016 MAC Newsletter.

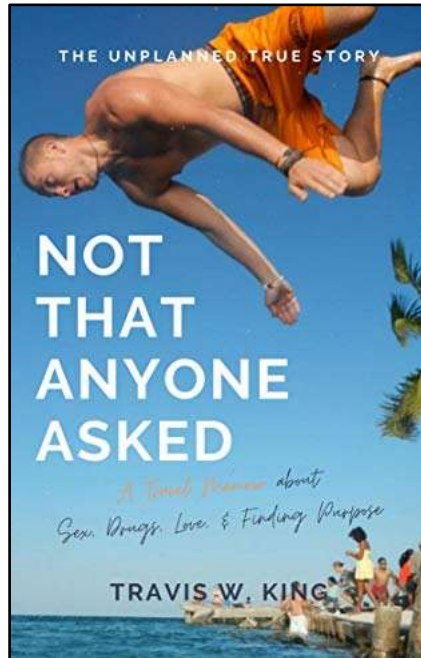
The following comes from the back of the book: "After finishing a Master's Degree at the age of 28, Travis couldn't bring himself to follow the blueprint laid out for success in the U.S., so he took off to South America. That first flight was the start of an adventure around the world—an adventure that his friends didn't understand and of which his father openly disapproved."

"Over four years and four continents, Travis chased a different version of success and sought a greater purpose; the world felt as though it had cracked open to new opportunities, new characters, and new adventures. He found himself training for his Dive master on Utila, a Honduran island, commercial fishing on a boat in Alaska, tending fields as a dragon fruit farmer on Maui, chasing dolphins as a kayak guide in Australia, and eventually handcuffed in prison—one domino slowly tapping the next."

Here are a few camp-related excerpts from the book:

A reference to teaching canoeing at Minikani: *I was a former camp counselor who taught canoeing. I'm an eternal optimist and I believe in my abilities, so while working that equation out on the white board of life, it somehow made sense that I could be an Alaskan kayak guide. Canoes and kayaks are different*

boats. They have different paddles. I had kayaked maybe twice in my life, but yes—let me take these paying tourists in kayaks out to glacial waters surrounded by animals that kill humans.



A reference to one of Minikani's youth working principles: *From the summers I worked as a camp counselor to my years running after-school programs for kids, one of my top youth-work mantras was always, "End everything while it is still fun." If you're playing kickball with a group of ten-year-olds and after an hour the kids start saying, "Can we do something else, we've been playing kickball forever...", the next time you toss out the idea of playing kickball their reaction will likely be lukewarm. But if you end kickball thirty minutes into it to unanimous pleas of "NO, it's a tie game, let us play 10 more minutes!" imagine the difference in their reaction when they find kickball on the schedule the following week.*

A reference to one of his summer camp crushes: *I was certain I was going to marry my very first crush. Leslie and I dated when we were 13,*

again at 18, and then again at 25. We had an extremely close group of friends (read: the exact same friends), friends we spent summers growing up alongside at Camp Minikani, and all the awkward school years and "phases" that came in between. The same camp. The same schools.

A reference to being from

Wisconsin: *I am a Wisconsin boy and proud of it. I really do travel with a Green Bay Packers jersey just to wear it for a certain sixteen (hopefully more) Sundays every year, and I know this is a seemingly stupid use of precious space—but it barely feels like a choice. Wisconsin is a beautiful state filled with "salt-of-the-earth" people, humble and kind folks who drink glasses of milk with dinner. I loved growing up there. It was full of soccer tournaments, summer camps, playing punk rock drums in suburban basements, and all the other things that fill childhood—first kisses, social stresses, being bullied, peer pressure, and shaping my identity as a new human in a huge world. I wouldn't exchange my childhood for anyone else's, except for one part.*

One book reviewer, Jarred Nixon, writes "Travis gives the reader an inside look into his soul as he takes on hilarious and heartwarming adventures across the globe. It's the kind of 'no holds barred' writing that makes you reevaluate your current principles in life and wonder why you haven't taken on more adventures yourself."

NTAA on the internet:

To purchase: [Amazon page](#)
 Website: www.traviswking.com
 Instagram: [@ntaa_memoir](#)
 Facebook: [Not That Anyone Asked Travel Memoir](#)



Camp is a Real Job

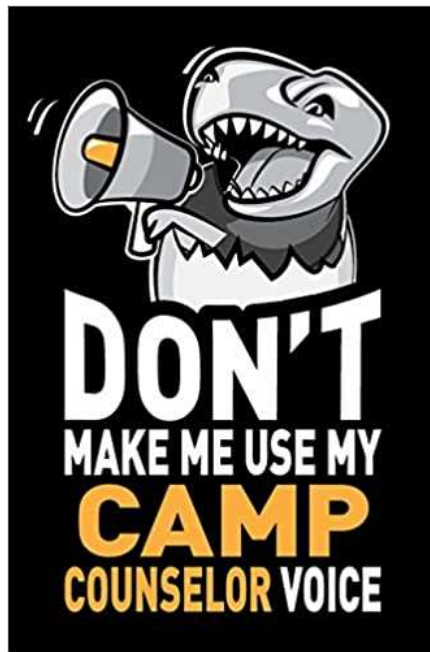
You may be thinking about refreshing your resume with all that’s happened the past year. A recent item at the ACA website was written to remind camp staff that working at a camp is a REAL JOB. How so? They gave the following points for you to consider and to include in your resume:

Leadership: You have supervised groups of all sizes on a regular basis, engaging in decision-making, behavior management, and living ethics — all necessary leadership skills for today.

21st Century Skills: The 5 C’s: Communication, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, Creativity, and Contribution, critical for success in today’s world, are developed and practiced daily at camp.

Diverse & Global Experience: Working at camp includes interacting with campers and staff from a variety of places, diversities and cultural perspectives gathered from around the US and the world.

Professional Development: It begins with the LT Program that trains you in leadership skills and continues while you’re on the job — building strong working teams with other staff.



Training & Certification: You may have acquired additional training at camp like CPR, first aid, waterfront safety and any activity specialist certifications — (receiving your knife card?).

Don’t forget to include these:

Networking Opportunities: Working with other staff and your connections to camp alumni can provide a link to possible internships or future job opportunities in a variety of careers.

Letter of Recommendation: Camp directors and leaders write great letters of recommendation because they take the time to get to know you as an individual and have seen you in action on a daily basis.

Active Words: Finally, be sure to include the following words in your resume: Advise • Analyze • Collaborate • Communicate • Facilitate • Lead • Manage • Resolve • Supervise • Train



Camp in the 40’s

(Editor’s Note: The following is an excerpt from “Camp Minikani Growing and Changing: The First 75 Years” by John Bolger. You may notice some similarities between then and now.)

World War II affected all of America, including Camp’s community. The staff built a Victory Garden to conserve resources. The outlook of the Minikani brochure changed as well. The director replaced the traditional Native American Chief with that of a black and white photo of Old Glory waving ragged in the wind. The motto of Minikani during this period was “For Health, For Victory”.



The tone of the letter to the parents changed as well. The brochure stated that boys were growing up in a world that forced them to face the harsh realities of life too quickly. “Camp allows them to recapture their precious youth ad allows them to mature in a more natural way.”

In 1946 almost one-third of the staff (11 out of 36) were veterans. Just as the nation was coming back from the war, so Minikani was beginning to recover the young men who had once been counselors and who had left to be soldiers.





By Eli Fyksen

◆ **What is your history at camp?**

I started at Minikani in 2005 through the AmeriCorps program right after I graduated college with a degree in environmental education and minor in camp management and mathematics. I moved into the top room in the farmhouse before it was condemned where I lived for almost 2 years. Anyone else ever live in the top of the farmhouse?

My first position on summer staff was leading expedition trips to Devil’s Lake rock climbing, canoeing the Kickapoo and hiking the Ice Age Trail. Anyone else live in a Teepee all summer? In 2007 I became the environmental education director running and operating all of the school and weekend groups. In the summer I provided assistance and leadership for the outpost and all trips programming. I lived in the bunker with 2 other staff. Anyone else ever live in the bunker? (I’ve lived in lot of places at camp... including the lower office, the basement of Brown lodge before remodel and now all of Brown lodge after remodel)

After a 4 year stint as the environmental education director for both Minikani and Matawa I took on the role of operations director for Minikani and Matawa (before closure in 2014) where it has been my duty to provide leadership and support for all of camp’s operations to ensure our programs are the highest quality, fully develop young

staff and campers, and incorporate our strategic plan. I look forward to continuing to serve at camp as the Executive Director where the strength of our programs and staff develops confident, independent and character driven leaders.

◆ **When you were a kid, did you ever go to a camp?**

I did go to camp as a kid for about a ½ week. True story, I actually got sent home...a story for a different day. My dad had always encouraged me through college to be a camp counselor as it is a really rewarding and fun job and saw some potential in me to be good at it. I always declined saying “It doesn’t pay enough.” “They work too hard.” Little did I know I wouldn’t just be a counselor one day but that camp would become my career. I guess fathers do know best sometimes.

◆ **Do you have a favorite place at Minikani?**

I definitely have a favorite place at camp! In fact I have two! One I tell people and one is just for me. The favorite place I tell people about is the new dock at Mud Lake. Especially in the evening or at night when the stars are out.

◆ **A favorite meal?**

No question at all, snack wraps!

◆ **Please tell about your family and what’s it like to live at camp year round.**

Historically I have always described Camp as the third member of my family. Similar to how people often times describe New York. My wife Chelsea and I got married at camp. We finalized the adoption of our two children at camp. (so now we have to describe camp as the 5th member of our family.) Chelsea, who teaches 8th grade, and my two kids Miracle and



Jeo absolutely LOVE living on camp. We wouldn’t change it for anything. This is the first time the two kids have lived in a place like this so there has been a little adjustment but they have fallen in love with camp, the people and the animals that call Minikani home. On any given day in the summer you can find Jeo waist deep in the lake catching frogs and Miracle dancing on Kossow field like no one is watching. Last year they were the first to swim in the lake in the spring and I’m sure will be again this year. They are the embodiment of what a “camp kid” should be. Work/life balance is an integral part of a camp director’s life and living on camp year round is one way that is achieved.



◆ **Any special skills you learned?**

This is a great question. There are so many hard skills that I have developed at Minikani. Learning how to climb on real rock, how to actually hike (I’ve always been a canoer), different knots. Those are great but most of the skills I have learned through camp have been

Continued on next page



Brown Rag

From the Brown Rag study materials:

“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 fellow man sincerely,
To act from honest motives purely,
To trust in God and Heaven
securely.



E Membership in the MAC is always free – for life – if you’ve ever worked at Minikani. Do you know anyone who hasn’t joined yet? Just send them to our website at minikanistafflodge.com and click on the tab “Join”.

E Have you changed your mailing address or your email address recently? If so, please send an update to the MAC so we can keep in touch with you. All you have to do is send your correct address to minikanistafflodge@gmail.com. We’ll take care of the rest, and you’ll be able to keep connected with our community.

E How are we doing? Contact us at minikanistafflodge@gmail.com. We’d love to hear from you.



skills that just make me a better person. I’ve learned how to be the best dad I can be, I’ve learned patience (so much patience), and I’ve learned to better meet people where they are. Minikani has a special way of not just “accepting people for who they are” but taking everyone’s uniqueness’s and helping to use those character traits to become the best version of one’s self.

◆ **If you could wave a ‘magic wand’ and eliminate something at camp, what would you get rid of?**

Oh, so many things! Mosquitos (although I think they build character), wasps and hornets, strep, buckthorn.

◆ **Now use the same ‘wand’ to create something at camp.**

A new Dining Hall! One with rafters we can still hang on and all the character of the current one but less of the cramped, hot, crowded, unable to move, “rushing to the salad bar” parts. I picture the ragger’s symbol inlayed into the floor using pieces of the old fireside floor! (Yes, we still have it.)

◆ **What’s the best way for alumni to give back to camp?**

First off, I want to thank the alumni for all that they have poured into camp, our programs, and our people. One of the best ways that alumni can give back to camp is simply put; support. Especially support of our staff. We have such talented young people every summer but it’s a really hard job, doesn’t pay much and takes a lot of effort to be a counselor. I know they appreciate all of the support that our alumni can and does give during summer. If you’d like to find out more about what that could look like send me an email, I’d be happy to chat. One of my favorite things

to do is support and connect our staff. The connections that exist within the alumni community are a built in network for our staff when they grow and strike out on their own in the world. Let’s use that network to help our future alumni be uber-successful in whatever their aspirations might be. If we don’t know something or don’t have a connection it’s almost guaranteed that someone in the MAC does!

◆ **Anything else to share?**

Camp Minikani is one of the things that I most love and am most passionate about in this world. Every day I get the privilege to watch and hear stories about how young people’s lives change through the power of camp as they discover their ‘best selves!’ A place where the strength of our programs and staff develops confident, independent and character driven leaders. There isn’t anything parallel to it in this world. I’d talk about camp any and every day, it’s a part of my family, not just as a job but interwoven through every aspect of my life. Give me a call or send me an email anytime if you want to talk about camp, I’m always willing to do so.

efyksen@ymcamke.org



Nature Notes

By Bruce

Rabbits really have it pretty good. They have a whole holiday (Easter), a beloved children’s story (Peter Rabbit), a breakfast cereal (Twixt), a VW car model and, according to some, 4 lucky feet. And, I understand, there’s a brand of running gear and a vibrator named after them (thanks, Google).

So let’s break it down. In nature a rabbit is a mammal of the family *Leporidae* with long ears, long hind legs and a short, fluffy tail. In WI when we talk rabbits, we’re talking about the Eastern Cottontail. You must have seen them at Minikani – in the fields and units, along the roads, the corral, range, waterfront, etc. Rabbits are ‘crepuscular’ which means that they are active at dawn and dusk, probably to avoid predators.

Rabbits are plant-based consumers. Just about any plant, but they do have favorites. Fresh plant material (shoots, buds, leaves, stems) of grasses, clovers, etc. when they can get it, but just about anything else when food is scarce, like in winter.

Here’s the other side of the coin – not only do rabbits eat things, they are also eaten. In WI their predators include humans, snakes, skunks, opossums, raccoons, cats, dogs, crows, foxes, great horned owls, hawks, and coyotes. One adaptation

for survival is their ability to get away. If their eyes, ears, and powerful legs don’t give them enough of a head start when avoiding predators, rabbits have a great way to avoid being caught. They move in a zig-zag pattern when running across an open field, making it very hard to catch. Oh yeah, they can also reach a top speed of 18 mph.

The other thing rabbits have going for them as a group is their rapid reproduction. A male becomes mature at one month, a female at 3 months. Once they reach that point, they can mate eight months out of the year every year for the rest of their lives. The female’s reproductive system doesn’t follow cycles; instead, ovulation is triggered by intercourse. After a 30-day gestation period she’ll give birth to a litter of



about 4 to 12 kits. (Yes, to a scientist a baby rabbit called a ‘kit’ or ‘kitten’, but not a bunny. Sorry.)

You know that nature likes to keep a balance. Many rabbits are born in a year, but many die. In WI a rabbit is lucky to see one candle on its birthday cake because of disease, starvation, and predators. With such a rapid breeding process, you might sometime come across a nest of kits. The mother builds a shallow nest of grass and fur and nurses her babies for only a few minutes just twice a day. If you find such a nest just leave it alone. Their mothers may not come that often, but they always know where her babies are.



Fun Rabbit Facts

- ◆ Like human fingernails, a rabbit's teeth will keep growing up to 5 inches a year if given the chance. Chewing on tough plant material luckily wears the teeth down and keeps them at a working length.
- ◆ When a rabbit is happy it will hop and do a twist in mid-air. This very cute behavior is called a “binky”.
- ◆ It's hard to sneak up on a rabbit: Their vision covers nearly 360 degrees, which allows them to see what's coming from behind them, above them, and from the sides without turning their heads.
- ◆ Yes, rabbits will sometimes eat their own poop and process it a second time. It may seem gross, but droppings are actually an essential part of a rabbit's diet. By re-digesting waste, they're able to absorb nutrients their bodies missed the first time around.
- ◆ Rabbits are built for evading predators in a hurry, and jumping is a part of that. The Guinness World Record for highest rabbit jump is over 3 feet. The longest rabbit jump record is almost 10 feet.
- ◆ When people mimic rabbits, they usually twitch their noses. Rabbits twitch their noses when they smell. They are well set up for smelling with 100 million scent receptors in their noses, and twitching helps expose all of them. Humans have a mere 5 million receptors for smell.

