



NEWSLETTER

May 2023
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Thanks To: Alex Hushek,
Matt Kolb, Haley Adams,
Brian Digate

Bruce Rasmussen, Editor
BruceRass@gmail.com

MAC 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.

Well, there it is (above) in black and white. That's what the MAC is all about. Look at all the action words: ('verbs' to the English teachers*) "dedicated" "maintaining" "connection" "acts" "strive" "honor" "support" and "preserve". The recipient of all these actions is "Minikani".

Camp Minikani is as strong as ever. Over the past few years there's been a few hurdles to jump over: Staff changes, YMCA's bankruptcy, and of course COVID, to name a few.

The MAC can't do much about these things, but we're here to give our support to Minikani, the staff, and all the campers.

Thank you, alumni, for all you do for your summer homeland. It goes without saying that there would be no MAC without you!

In this issue there's a great story about Camperships on page 4 and an article about the "Minikani Around the World" celebration on page 8. We'll also introduce our new MAC Board members and camp's Ad Staff for the summer.

Please consider helping the MAC during our "May Giving Month". 90% of your gift dollars will find their way back to Minikani, and that's just the way we like it.

*Thanks to my 8th grade English teacher, Mrs. Wichman.

May Giving Month

You probably have some kind of a ‘budget’ for your finances. It makes a lot of sense. You put some money aside for that special purchase or upcoming trip. Your paycheck gets split up into car payments, food, rent, etc. Here at the MAC we also have a ‘budget’.



When money comes in, we have three ‘buckets’ for them. The first 30% is money we give to Minikani – as a gift from the MAC. The second 30% is money we give to Minikani – for a special reason – we call it our “Capital Fund”. The third 30% is used to support our campership kids. The final 10% is used to run our organization (website, domain, postage, etc.)

Once a year, during the month of May, we ask you to help us fill our ‘buckets’ back up. Actually, they are your buckets, for you are the Minikani Alumni. We don’t tell you how much to donate, as each person will give what they will. We appreciate every dollar we receive. As a “thank you” we put your name on our website and send you a small gift – a sticker from the MAC.

Here’s a link to our website. Click on the “Donations” tab to learn more and to make your donation.

minikanistafflodge.com



MAC Board of Directors 2023

2023 MAC Board of Directors

Executive Co-Directors

Haley Adams
Matt Kolb

Secretary and Minikani Board Liaison

Hillary Lobenstein

Staff/Alumni Liaisons

Alex Hushek
Amy Schiman

Treasurer and Newsletter Editor

Bruce Rasmussen

Board Members

Gwen Chamberlin
Ursula Neuwirth
Sam Smith

Contact any board member through our email address:

minikanistafflodge@gmail.com



Minikani Summer Ad Staff 2023

Assistant Summer Camp Director:

Chris (Cricket) Malicky

Wellness Coordinator

Olivia Holbrook

Trailblazer Unit Director:

Josie Morkin

Pioneer Unit Director:

Robby Gral

Explorer Unit Directors:

Miranda Olson,
Willem Caster
Aubrey McLaren

Day Camp Directors:

Clayton Holbrook,
Noel Frazier

Minicamp Director:

Mindy Weber
Payton Kuenzi

LT Directors:

Anna Rooney, Will Moran,
Augie Jurva, Margo Kurth

Crafts Director:

Grace Dugan

Gun and Run Director:

Ally Chung

Wrangler:

Ellen Abad Santos

AC Director:

Jack Gorski

WSA Director:

Chloe Proebsting

Waterfront Director:

Lily Trogus

Trips and Leadership Director:

Erica Kalberer

Flex Directors:

Harry Coffou
Farrah Salawdeh



“I would be giving and forget the gift.”

MAC Co-Directors

Haley Adams and Matt Kolb were both LT I's the summer of 2009. Fourteen years later they find themselves as Co-Directors of the Minikani Alumni Community. I caught up with the busy two recently to find out a little more about each them.

Haley started going to camp when she was 8 years old in 2002. (You do the math...) She was an LT, then a counselor, AC Director, and finally Minicamp Director in 2015. Matt followed a similar path: He started at camp when he was 8, became an LT, then a counselor whose 'skill' was crafts. He became the Crafts Director in 2015 and was the Boy's Unit Director for his last year at camp in 2016.



I asked them if they had a favorite memory or experience from their time at camp. Haley shared a favorite memory from when she was a 3rd year counselor. "Everyone in my year sang a song together at the closing campfire – "Soak up the Sun" by Sheryl Crow. It was so fun for us to all reunite after a summer



rotating through Explorer Hill and make one last memory before the summer was over."

Matt's favorite memory also included the end of the summer. "I always loved the last dinner of a session singing the Minikani Spirit Song (U Rah Rah Minikani). My last year at camp the dinner that closed the summer was one I will never forget. I'm not sure if I'll experience that kind of energy and emotion again."



I also asked them both why they chose to be a Co-Director on the MAC Board. Haley: "I want to stay involved with camp and give alumni an opportunity to stay involved as well. We have a lot of passionate alumni in our network and I am excited to help channel their efforts into making camp a better place." Matt: "I've chosen to be a Co-Director because I believe in the mission and the vision of the MAC. I think Haley and I have very complimentary skills that will allow

us to lead the MAC board in a productive manor. We hope to continue the legacy the MAC has set as well as strive to grow and improve through the years to come!" Both Matt and Haley enjoy being on the MAC Board of Directors. Their comments were very similar: "Being on the MAC Board has been a labor of love." "It's a joy to work with my close, lifelong camp friends." "It's a great way to stay up-to-date on the inner workings at camp." "It's always a blast to plan parties and get-togethers!"

They both agree with what you, the alumni, can do to make the MAC even better: Stay involved! Continue to read our newsletter and follow us on Facebook and Instagram (@minikanielumnicommunity). Come out to the events we plan, such as the Spring Workday at camp and the annual Holiday Party. Also - please let us know how we can make it easier for you to stay connected to camp.

A final comment from both: "We're always looking to bring new folks onto the Board, so reach out if you or anyone you know might be interested :) Being on the MAC board is fun and rewarding!"



Adam's Story

Camp is a great place to make friends – for a week, for a summer, or, if you're lucky like some of us, for a lifetime. While 'camp' is not for everyone, you and I have a pretty good idea of the kind of kid that can really benefit from Minikani. Part of what the MAC does is to support kids that don't have the financial wherewithal that a week or two at Minikani takes. Support might also mean transportation, supplies and equipment, mentoring, help with the registration process, and more.



While your financial support is always welcome, (See "May Giving Month" on page 2) another part of the campership equation is finding and identifying potential campership kids. Many of our members have careers working with kids, while others come across potential campers at their church, neighborhood, community center, Big Brothers & Sisters, etc.

Years ago the MAC received an email from an alumnus: "I think I've got a great candidate for a Campership scholarship at Minikani. His name is Adam (not his real name), he's 8 years old, and he's been through a lot. He is from Kansas where he lived with his mom until recently. His mom is a drug addict and drug dealer, and is currently incarcerated there. Adam's dad, Chuck, lives in Milwaukee."



"Chuck has fought for custody of Adam ever since he was born to no avail since they were never married. Last year Adam's mom had a moment of clarity and called Chuck stating she would like to give Adam away to him. After Adam's mom was arrested, Chuck was recognized as his legal guardian."

"Chuck has been dating a girl named Heather for 5 years. Last year, Adam began calling Heather "Mom". Heather is in school full time and Chuck works in construction. I asked them if they had ever considered sending Adam to a summer camp. They said they would love to - but simply can't afford it."

Here's where the MAC comes in. We all know that a week at Minikani is not cheap, but well worth the price. Many of us would find it difficult to come up with \$970 for Adam to have a Minikani experience this summer. But most of us can afford to make a donation to the MAC of \$5, \$10, \$25, \$100 or more. When we put our money together we can give kids like Adam an experience of their lifetime.

If you've already made a donation this month, thank you. If you haven't yet, won't you consider making a donation now? All you have to do is go to our website, click on the "Donations" tab, and make a

donation using a credit card. Sure, it is easy to hear Adam's story and think something like "The poor kid – he could really benefit from camp". But hopefully it's just as easy to click on the link below and help the MAC support camperships.

If you come across a potential campership kid, please let us know. While it's probably too late to get anyone into camp this summer, January 2024 would be a good time to start the MAC campership process. That way we can work with you to make a week or two at Minikani a reality for some deserving kids.

www.minikanistafflodge.com



Join the MAC for Alumni Workday on Saturday, June 10!

Sign up for a shift here (<https://ymcamke.volunteermatters.org/project-cata-log/52>) — there are options for a morning or an afternoon shift (or both!). Lunch will be provided to all volunteers!

If you will need childcare during the day, please reach out to Eli (efyksen@ymcamke.org) to coordinate. Looking forward to seeing you there!



Explorer Kybo

It wasn't too long ago that you could buy ground coffee in metal cans. (Folgers stopped using metal cans in 2004, and Maxwell House was right behind.) Those cans were ideal for storing the bits and bobs around the house that didn't seem to have a home, and, if you're interested, you can find over 170 Coffee Can Crafts on Pinterest.

Back when Minikani was started, Scout and YMCA camps began to spring up in rural areas across the country. Water for these camps was usually supplied by hand pumps and bathroom facilities consisted of a pit in the ground surrounded by an outhouse for a little privacy. To help keep the odor under control a measure of lye or lime was sprinkled into the hole when needed.



At the same time there was a popular brand of coffee in the Northeast called Kybo Coffee, whose motto was "A Cupful of Satisfaction". Those empty coffee cans were perfect for storing the lime that would be used in the pit toilet. It probably didn't take long for the toilet and the word Kybo to

become synonymous, at least in camping situations.

Today there are lots of people that think "Kybo" stands for "Keep your bowels open" but this is likely a "backronym" — an acronym formed to fit an already existing word.

Why all this talk of toilets, you ask? They have just completed, and will soon have a "Ribbon Cutting", for the new Bathhouse on Explorer Hill. While you and I might want to call it a KYBO, those in the know prefer to call it a "Bathhouse". Perhaps that is more accurate with its sinks, showers, changing areas and storage – plus the required toilets and urinals. It would be very surprising if an old Kybo coffee can ever showed up in a real Kybo.



Construction of the New Explorer Kybo



Minikani Kybo History

Way back when camp was just tents and two buildings (Farm House and Barn), the camper's toilet was located in a little shed built off the barn. As the camp grew, the need for adequate bathroom facilities also grew.

Eventually each Unit had their own bathhouse, which they called a Kybo. Everyone ate in Fireside Lodge, which was the Dining Hall. If nature called during a meal, campers would have to run all the way back to their unit to answer the call.

In 1953 older boys were moved up to Explorer Hill and a Kybo was built for them there. (There were no girls at camp back then.) In the recent past girls were also moved to The Hill, so they used the Kybo there and the Explorer boys shared the "new" Pioneer Unit Kybo, which was built onto the existing Pioneer Rec Shelter about 1980. This replaced a free standing Kybo building between cabins 17 and 10 that is now used for storage. The Trailblazer Unit Kybo had a major remodel back around 1970 so it could be used off-season for both men and women.

SpotLight On Alumni

Brian Digate



◆ **What is your history at Camp?**

My first Minikani experience was at Winter Camp in 1987. I was only 7 years old but we said that I was 8 so that I could go. You can see the picture of me sitting on my bunk. It was in what was called Indian Rec. and it was one big room. Now it is divided into three cabins.

My last year of camp was 2001. I did Nature as an LT3, then Crafts, and my last year of camp I was Crafts Director. Why did I go to Minikani? My parents signed me up because that is what a lot of families in the North Shore of Milwaukee did.

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

My favorite job at camp was Crafts Director. Each year I was at camp was better than the year before. So, my last year of camp was my best. At first I thought it wouldn't be as good because I wouldn't have those strong connections with my cabin. But instead, I had great connections with many campers.

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

So many. But one is, "She blinded me with Science." Thanks Drew Maxwell.

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

I was a teacher for 15 years and am a parent now. There were things that I learned when I was 15 in the leadership program that I used every day when I taught and now I still use them as a parent.

At the end of my first day at my current job I asked my boss, "How did today go? What can I work on for tomorrow?" Why did I say that? I was taught to say this after I helped in skills when I was an LT.

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

I was a teacher, so the transition was easy. I think that being a teacher and a parent has to be harder if you have never been through the LT program.



“My second explorer year. I have the water canteen around my neck. My thing was "Canteen Boy" based on the Adam Sandler character.”

◆ **Do you have any advice for our younger alumni who are just starting their careers?**

Don't be afraid to use your Minikani connections when you're job hunting. I was a preschool teacher for years, but I always wanted to be a public school teacher. A camp connection is what got me an interview and ultimately the job.

◆ **What was your favorite meal at Minikani?**

As a camper it was cinnamon toast for breakfast and chicken patty sandwiches for lunch.



◆ **If you could go back in time and re-live just one Special Day or Camp Activity, what would that be?**

Allison Auda and I did the first Pickle Day. The second one didn't go quite well, but the first was great. I would love to remember the script that we used. It was really fun.

◆ **When you were helping to get the MAC set up back in 2009, did you ever think that we'd have 600+ members and be able to help over 50 kids come to Minikani?**

I had no idea and never thought anything about success. I just did what Perry LaRoque told me to do. (Editor's Note: Perry and Brian must have known what they were doing – the MAC still uses Brian's set up today to register new alumni into our community.)

◆ **Anything else to share?**

Minikani was and is a great place. We should all be thankful that we got to experience some of that Minikani Magic.



Nature Notes

By Bruce

Mammals are fur bearing animals whose young are born alive and then fed milk. Out of the 4,660 kinds of mammals on earth almost half (2,050) are Rodents. All rodents have a pair of upper and lower front teeth used for gnawing. More than 70 species of mice live in North America. Wisconsin's most common mice are the house mouse, deer mouse, and white-footed mouse. These are the cute, classic mice with brown fur, white bellies, long tails, prominent ears, and big black eyes.



OK, so the house mouse isn't so cute when it's living in YOUR house, but all mice have a similar ecological lifestyle: To eat and be eaten. Mice are *keystone* species in almost every ecosystem. They link plants and predators in every terrestrial ecosystem - forests, fields, and deserts. Weasels, foxes, coyotes, hawks, owls, skunks, and shrews all eat mice. Name a predator, and it probably eats mice.

On the other hand, mice also do a lot of eating. They are very good at Insect Control. Most species of mice eat small insects, their larvae, and any eggs they can find. While some prefer nuts and seeds, mice that eat insects, spiders and their young can help keep populations down.

Mice are also good at Seed Dispersal. Many plants depend on mice to transport their seeds to other areas, where they might germinate and grow into new plants. Mice might also drop seeds while hoarding or storing food or they might leave them behind in their droppings. In many cases, mice do not consume all the seeds they hoard and in the spring these may sprout into new plants.

Here are a couple of things that help make mice so successful:

- 1) They can survive in a wide range of habitats, sometimes nicknamed a "mammalian weed". They have the widest distribution on the planet of any mammal - second only to humans.
- 2) They have a small body size. The mouse is able to enter buildings and rooms through small openings which larger rodents (rats?) cannot fit. By flattening out their bodies, mice are able to squeeze through gaps as small as 6mm, roughly the size of a pencil!
- 3) Mice have a very high reproductive potential. The average litter contains five to seven young, but can range from two to 13 mice. A female can give birth to five or 10 litters of five or six pups a year, and those pups can breed by the time they're just a month old.
- 4) They require little or no water. Unlike most other mammals, the house mouse has a kidney system



similar to that of the desert rat. The water it needs for its body comes from the food it eats.

Here are some things you probably didn't already know about mice:



- 1) Mice can sing. They are only 4 mammals that can sing – mice, whales, bats, and of course, humans. Male mice will serenade the

females when they are courting. They can also produce ultrasound to chat with each other, which cannot usually be heard by humans.

- 2) Mice, rats and humans all have about 30,000 genes. About 95% are shared by the three species. That's why they make such great research animals. Studies with mice have been awarded 30 Nobel prizes.

- 3) Mice have excellent hearing but poor eyesight. Like other rodents they see best in dim light. They are colorblind as well. Most house mice that live in buildings are active when people are inactive.

- 4) Mice are very nimble pests. They are good swimmers and can climb many surfaces. Their tails provide them with balance, allowing them to walk across ropes and wires. What's more, they can jump a foot high and run as fast as 7.5 miles per hour!

- 5) A baby mouse is called a 'pup' or a 'kitten'. Males are 'bucks' and females are 'does'. A group of mice is called a "mischief".

- 6) Mice don't particularly like cheese. They prefer peanut butter.



MINIKANI AROUND THE WORLD

March, 2023

The photos tell most of the story: Spend some time in early spring thinking about Minikani. Get together with other alumni, have a couple drinks, maybe some food, and let the “Spirit of Minikani” wrap around you. While we didn’t quite make it around the whole world, there’s always next year. A big thanks to everyone who sponsored an event and participated.



Denver, CO - David Van Sicklen, Host



MKE – Nina Darling, Host



Cottage Grove, WI – Hillary Lobenstein, Host



Minneapolis – Clare Baumgart, Host



MILWAUKEE – Kendall Dowsett, Host

– Almost 40 people gathered later in the month to celebrate their “Minikani-ness”. Here’s what Kendall had to say:
“We had to reschedule this one due to a sick kiddo (the host!) but thankfully our RSVP list came through and we were able to celebrate together. Thanks Mama Minikani for these wonderful people and future campers!!!!”

MKE Bar Crawl - Alex Hushek
Guess none of the 20 people had a phone that could take photos – But It was a wonderful response! They all seemed to have a great time.