



NEWSLETTER



Inside this Issue

- 1 Mission Statement
- 2 Leadership Changes
- 2 Mike as LT
- 3 I Would Be True
- 4 Hire a Camp Counselor
- 5 Announcements
- 6 Purple Rag
- 7 Spotlight on Alumni
- 8 Nature Notes

Thanks To: Tom Cramer, Lindsay Foster, Hillary Lobenstein, Perry LaRoque, and Kevin Nordahl

Bruce Rasmussen, Editor
BruceRass@wi.rr.com

As we begin our 6th year here at MAC, we need you more than ever. Our Mission Statement keeps us busy 1) Keeping you connected to your “summer homeland”, 2) Giving you opportunities to give back to Minikani, 3) Supporting current Minikani programming, and 4) Helping to preserve the Minikani traditions.

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.

Already in the planning stages are a **Holiday Fundraiser** (Saturday December 20, 2014) in Milwaukee, our very popular **Dinner Around the World** (March 7, 2015) with locations T.B.D., and a once every other year opportunity to return to

Minikani for the **Alumni Weekend**, which will be held in August, 2015.

But we’ve got lots more things ‘on-tap’ that will keep you connected and let you give back at the same time. Please keep reading your emails, checking the website,

and encouraging all your camp friends to do the same. Like we said in the beginning, we need you now more than ever. Thanks for being a member of the Minikani Alumni Community. 

Leadership Changes

By Tom Cramer
Summer Camp Director

I am very excited to announce that next summer we will be launching a new Leadership Training Program at Minikani! For the past two years we have been working hard to address concerns with the current LT and OLT programs to create one cohesive, challenging, three year program that will best serve all participants and preserve all the elements that have made them such outstanding programs to begin with.

Although there are many exciting elements to this new program, the most noticeable change is the combination of the OLT and LT programs into one unified program. In the New Leadership Training program, the first year will more closely reflect the OLT1 year. All participants in the new program will spend their first week hiking the beautiful Superior Hiking Trail, building their work ethic and working on teamwork and communication – foundational skills that will bring them success while at camp. Their second week will be spent at camp participating in the residential side of the program: participating with and taking over a cabin, helping in Minicamp, spending mornings with a skill area, etc.

The second year of our program will more closely reflect the LT program you are familiar with, with a renewed focus on really strengthen the connection with resident camp, and building skills needed to effectively lead a group of campers. During the first week and a half, participants will have the

opportunity to spend a full 48 hours with a cabin, first observing, and later planning and leading a full day of activities. They will also participate in Minicamp and skills, but will be challenged to take on a larger leadership role in these areas as well. Their session will conclude with a three night camping trip. During this trip they will travel to the Milwaukee area for a capstone service project.

In this new structure, LT1s and LT2s will be at camp at the same time, which will allow for the addition of a mentoring program between the two years. This will help ease the transition of LT1s back into camp after their hike, and allow LT2s to demonstrate what they have learned throughout their two years in the program.



From the addition of female campers into the program to moving the program from waterfront cabins, to Kossow, to the Leadership Lodge, to the addition of the OLT program, our Leadership Training program has seen significant change. We are confident that this new program will build the best possible leaders for camp and our communities. If you have any questions, feel free to shoot me an email or give me a call.

In the Spirit,

Tom Cramer
262-251-9080
tcramer@ymcamke.org



Mike as LT

By Lindsay Quilling Foster



Brandt (L) and Mike (R)

My husband, Brandt Foster and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the MAC for their continued support in funding an incredible opportunity for our "Little", Mike. Mike and Brandt have been matched in the Big Brothers Big Sisters organization since 2010, when Mike was only 10 years old.

In 2011, I reached out to see if we could get a campership for him from the MAC. Mike spent his first week at camp in July 2011 and fell in love with Minikani, as I knew he would! Since then, he has returned each Summer, culminating in his fourth year this July and his first Explorer experience.

Continued on page 3



It has been so rewarding to see him grow throughout his Camp years, from the terrified 11 year old when we first dropped him off to the confident 14 year old this Summer who had the most years under his belt at Minikani in his cabin! Like most of us, Mike's truest and best self 'shines' at Camp and we've learned so much about him and his strengths through the stories he shares about his experiences at Minikani.

While Camp takes most kids outside of their comfort zone, Mike has been able to experience things that he never would have the opportunity otherwise. Each year we have been so proud to learn of his enthusiasm regarding campouts, climbing the wall or canoeing up North!

Two weeks ago, Mike received the ultimate gift of being accepted into the LT program for 2015. He is so excited to embark upon this 3 year experience and we are so proud of him. Instead of going to Camp once a year, he will now have the opportunity to be a part of the Minikani family year round as well as gain incredible leadership skills, participate in community service and continue to form lifelong bonds and friendships.

We are so grateful to the MAC for giving a fantastic kid the opportunity of a lifetime and for continuing to sponsor him throughout. Mike is currently a freshman at Bradley Tech High School in Milwaukee and is enjoying playing on the JV football team this Fall. He is now really looking forward to LT Fall weekend in November!

Lindsay Quilling Foster



Editor's Note: See what your donations and support of our Holiday Fundraiser can do? Last summer we were able to send 7 kids just like Mike to Minikani during the summer. Thanks to your generosity these kids had a great Minikani experience, and will hopefully continue to grow at Minikani.

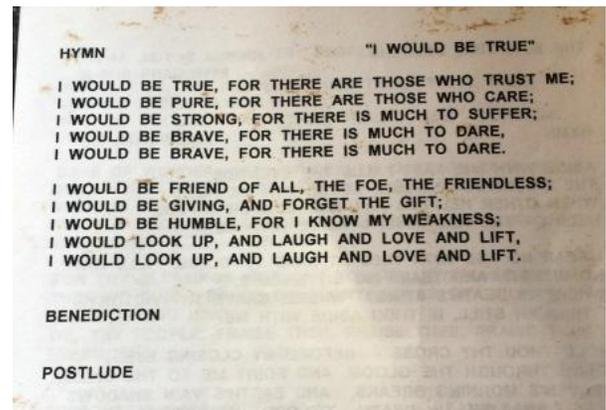


I Would Be True

By Hillary Lobenstein

My father recently requested that I remove anything of value from our family's storage area in a quest to downsize. I received a tablecloth, a plastic storage bin, and a food dehydrator. But while I was there, I noticed my grandparents' Bible was in a box. I thought my mother might like to have the book restored. I have memories of this Bible on my grandparents' coffee table next to the lovely glass container of M&Ms. My grandfather passed away in 1993, and my grandmother passed away in 2002.

I brought the Bible home. My daughter, Audra, an inquisitive and spunky four year old wanted to see the Bible. We began examining it. My grandmother had put many



envelopes, letters, and inserts into the pages of her Bible in the last few years of her life. One insert that we found was from a church service for August 27, 2000. The final hymn of that service was "I Would Be True." I felt incredibly blessed to have found this in my grandparents' Bible. It truly spoke to me and was a spiritual experience. It connected my grandparents to my daughter even though they never met.



I LOVE CAMP MINIKANI!

www.minikani.org · 262-251-9080

the **Y** YMCA

YMCA Camp **Minikani**
Feel the Spirit

Hire a Counselor

By Anne Archer Yetsko

Editor's Note: What do Jon Lange, Perry LaRoque, Jim Flint and Erik Herbst all have in common? Here's a clue...

10 Reasons Why Businesses Should Hire Former Camp Counselors

When I speak with friends who work in other industries, I always tell them that if you have an applicant who has been a camp counselor and has a positive reference from that camp, they should move to the top of that pile of applications that are overflowing on their desk. A camp counselor is one of the hardest jobs out there. It is not all fun and games. Here is my list of the top 10 qualities you get when you hire someone who has been a camp counselor.

A good communicator: Camp counselors have to be able to communicate well with children, parents, coworkers, and superiors. This is different from any other job because parents leave the most valuable thing in their lives with us, their child. At our camp they have about 10 minutes to speak to the counselors and feel confident in



them before they leave their perfect child with them for two weeks. That 10-minute conversation is one that will have a lasting impact on that parent. **THEY WILL CLING TO EVERY WORD!**

A life-long learner: When someone works in a camp setting, they learn that to be successful in camp and in life they have to realize they have a lot to learn not only about camp and their campers but also about themselves. Once they make that transition they are able to approach every situation in life with an "I want to learn more" attitude.



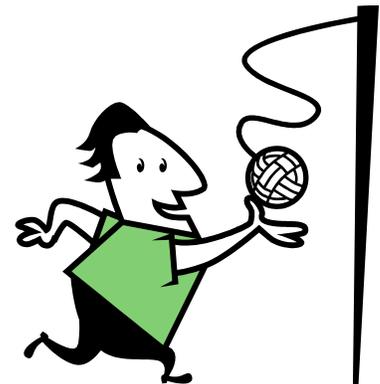
A self-starter: Most camps have between 25-150 cabin counselors. While they are given very good supervision, no one is holding their hand every step of the way. They very quickly learn that as far as their campers are concerned, **THEY** are the "go-to" person. If one of their children forgets a toothbrush it is their responsibility to get them one from the infirmary.

A resilient individual: Camp counselors can handle anything. Just ask the counselor who has been helping a camper overcome homesickness while teaching their activity in the rain for 4 days straight, only to learn that there is a

child in their cabin with lice. When they hear this, instead of curling up in a ball and hiding (the way any normal person would), they grab their gloves, strip all the beds in the cabin, get all of the laundry to the cleaners, and get all the campers lined up outside to check each one for nits. I repeat, camp counselors can, and do, handle anything!

A problem solver: At camp we try to keep things very scheduled and organized, but at the drop of a hat, plans can change. Imagine walking out of the dining hall with 250 campers and staff to play sock war (like capture the flag but you get to throw socks at each other!) when you hear a loud burst of thunder and have to come up with a new plan in an instant.

A creative thinker: When you need a new plan immediately, leave it to a camp counselor to come up with the most brilliant and fun game that anyone has ever heard of. If you think a boardroom of 10 lawyers is intimidating try standing in front of 200 children who are expecting to have the most fun they have ever had and your plan that you have been working on all week just got rained out.



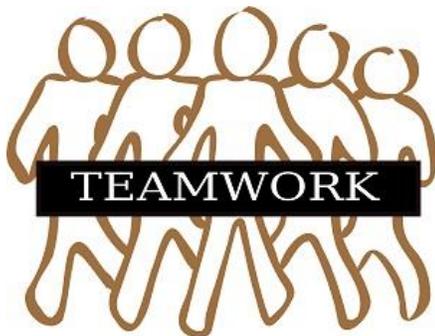
A detail-oriented worker: Remember, camp counselors are responsible for **THE** most important
Continued on page 5

thing in a parent’s life. Each and every detail is unbelievably important! Did a child have enough to eat at breakfast, drink enough water, make a new friend, skin their knee, play soccer, miss their mom, have wet shoes, lose their sweatshirt . . . ? Now multiply this by a whole cabin of campers!



A leader: It does not matter if you consider yourself a leader or not, the moment children arrive on property their counselor is their leader and their biggest role model. They watch their counselor’s every move. It is amazing how quickly camp counselors learn how to take on this role and own it. The way these children talk about their counselors when they leave is a testament to what great leaders they are.

A team player: Camp counselors are some of the best team players you will ever meet. They have learned that they cannot do it all on their own and that the best product is produced when you have a team



working on it. In a camp setting, you need all different personality types to be able to meet each and every child where they are. To come up with the most fun game, camp counselors know it won’t come from one person but an army of people working toward the same goal. Most people come into this job thinking they can do it all, but it does not take long for them to realize that this job is physically impossible alone.

A solid work ethic: It is very difficult to explain to someone who has never been a camp counselor how hard this job really is. These college students work 24 hours a day for 3 months with very little time off and they do all the things mentioned in 1–9 with a smile on their face.

Employers who themselves have been camp counselors understand the qualities required to successfully do this job and, consequently, often seek these individuals out when filling positions. But now the secret is getting out and having “Summer Camp Counselor” on a resume can make a potential employee much more desirable!

Anne Archer Yetsko is the associate director of Camp Merri-Mac in Black Mountain, North Carolina. She has worked for Merri-Mac for 12 years and is also a recent graduate of Touro University’s Camp Administration and Leadership master’s program. This blog was originally posted on the Merri-Mac blog.



◆ Mark your calendars now for the upcoming Holiday Event on Saturday, December 20, 2014. While you’re at it, jot down Saturday, March 7, 2015 – our Dinner Around the World date.

◆ Brian Siegal and Amanda Hendrickson are co-chairing our Holiday Event. If you want to get in on the ground floor and help (planning, auction etc.) please volunteer with them via email: bsiegel@gmail.com hendrickson.amanda@gmail.com

◆ Membership in the MAC is always free – for life – if you’ve ever worked at Minikani. (True, we give you the ‘opportunity’ to give a gift during the month of May, but it isn’t required.) Do you know anyone who hasn’t joined yet?

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



Purple Rag

By Hillary Lobenstein

On July 15 of this past summer, I received a message from one of my campers, Christyl Uhan. She decided to accept the challenge of the Purple Rag, and she wanted me to tie her rag. I was thrilled about Christyl's request. It was so meaningful to me to be asked to tie a rag so many years later. A lot of time has passed since I last tied a rag; in fact, I haven't tied a camper's rag since 1996 when I was a counselor in the Explorer and Girls Unit. Eighteen years ago.

We set the date with Tom Cramer for August 20th at 9 pm in front of the Nature Lodge. I arrived slightly early and was able to walk quietly around camp. There were day campers overnight for their one night at camp. A few campers and counselors were around Council Bluff talking quietly that evening as I walked past. There was a lovely moon over Amy Belle that evening. The lake was calm on one of the final nights of summer. Walking around camp without a headlamp or flashlight is one of life's small joys; I remember where paths and trails lead even though I have not worked at camp since 2001.



I trekked over to the Nature Lodge soon to be greeted by Christyl, Tom, and other current staff members. We set off for Ragger's Point. A number of staff members joined us. One of the staff members led Christyl to Ragger's Point for the ceremony. It was incredible to share that ceremony with current staff members and Christyl. We are all connected by the Ragger's program. Even though it has been years since I last participated in a Ragger's ceremony, I was connected through the place—Camp Minikani itself, by my camper—Christyl, and by the Ragger's Creed.



I tied Christyl's purple rag and whispered in her ear what I had said to many other campers, "I am tying your purple rag in a square knot; this represents the square life of a ragger: spiritual, mental, physical, and social." We then recited the Ragger's Creed. I congratulated Christyl, hugged her, and left Christyl to her own thoughts and meditation. It was an honor to have been asked to tie a purple rag, especially after so many years away from camp. Camp will always be an important part of my life; and for that, I am eternally grateful.



Please update your address changes.

Have you changed your email address in the last couple of years? Do you have multiple email addresses that you seldom check? Has it been a while since you've heard from the MAC? Have you moved to a new address or changed your name? Do you know an alumnus who doesn't hear from us? If you can answer "yes" to any of these questions, please let us know so we can still communicate with you. It's very easy to do. Simply go to our website and click on "Contact Us", or email us at (minikanistafflodge@gmail.com)

Pizza Party



Yup, it was some party last July 25th in Robertson Lodge. You can tell by this photo that there was plenty of pizza, breadsticks, and soda for all the summer staff to enjoy, compliments of the MAC.



SpotLight

On Alumni

Perry LaRoque

Perry was born in Menomonee Falls (MF) and grew up just down the lake from Minikani. His mom was the preschool teacher at Tot Time, which used to be in the Infirmary. He often spent meals eating in his high chair at the 2nd staff table. Besides running around camp as the



camp brat, he first attended Mini-Kamp with Nature Bruce, then was a two-weeker when he was 8. He went through the leadership program and was a counselor, Wilderness Survival Director, Waterfront Director, BU Director, and then the Alumni Director. Here's what he has to say about his experiences at Minikani and after:

◆ **Do you have any particularly 'fond' memories of camp?**

My brother, who had left the summer before to move to Tucson, surprised me and came back to tie my red rag. My white rag ceremony. The night the BU counselors performed "All that Jazz" at the closing campfire after working on it all summer long. Listening to Taps echo across the lake.

◆ **Did you develop any special skills while at camp?**

A positive attitude. I remember canoeing in the rain on my Explorer Trip and my counselor John Bolger said it was all about perspective and began singing and pretending like he was happy it was raining. I've learned that having a positive outlook can get you through anything.

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

Not easily. I wish I could have stayed longer at camp, but circumstances required that I move on to my special education teaching career.

◆ **What work you are doing now?**

After 7 years as a professor, I founded Mansfield Hall in 2012. Mansfield Hall is a comprehensive post-secondary living and learning community for students with disabilities in Burlington, VT. It's the only program of its kind in the country and has gotten national attention. Currently, we have 25 students, who come from 15 different states and two countries. It's been so successful that we are adding a new location in Madison, WI, which will be run by Sean LaRoque, who is also a founding partner and my big brother. We will definitely be looking to hire some good Minikani folks, so get in touch with us! www.mansfieldhall.org

◆ **Most of us have known a LaRoque at Minikani. Please tell us about your family.**

My dad Lloyd was the program director at Minikani for 30 years and my mom Cindy ran the campstore (with my help) and ran the preschool. My sister Kristin and my brother-in-law Steve Hasbrook, started dating at camp and had a notorious romance as LT Directors. My brother Sean and my sister-in-

law Susan, also met at camp and got engaged in the Chapel Area. My wife Emily Mazzulla and I met at camp and started dating after we both left Minikani. My oldest nephew is currently a counselor at Minikani, and my niece / god-daughter Kellie, just got into the LT program. All of my other nieces and nephews attend as campers. Emily and I have an amazing 9-month old future Minikani camper James Thomas.

◆ **How often do thoughts of camp and Minikani people 'pop' into your head?**

I'm surrounded by camp people. Every one of my best friends, wife, family, are all Minikani alums. It's always great to run across random Minikani alums around the country, we all have so much in common. Camp is always on my mind.



◆ **Anything else you'd like to share?**

I would like to thank everyone for making it a better world.



Nature Notes

By Bruce

Mushrooms

Mention the word ‘mushroom’ and most people are pretty clear about their feelings – they either love them or hate them. Maybe after reading this you’ll at least have a better understanding of what they are and what they do for us.

Mushrooms are just one in a category of living things called fungi, which also includes mildews, molds, and yeasts.

Fungi perform an essential role in the breakdown and decomposition of organic matter and have important roles in nutrient recycling and exchange. Because they can’t make their own food like green plants or go hunting for food like animals, they must obtain their food (nutrients) from breaking down their surroundings. They secrete

digestive enzymes into the area around them, in effect digest their food outside of their bodies. Then they absorb the smaller particles and incorporate the nutrients into their own cells. As a result, organic materials are neatly broken down and become available for recycling. Some fungi are used as food



(mushrooms and truffles), or as leavening agents for breads, and others in the fermentation of various food products, such as wine and beer. Since the 1940s, fungi have been used for making antibiotics like penicillin, and, more recently, various enzymes made by fungi are used industrially and in detergents.

Mushrooms are the reproductive organs or ‘fruits’ of some fungi and are the only visible part that we can see. The fungus organism itself consists mostly of its ‘mycelium’, which is a web of very fine threads (hyphae) that stretch invisibly and hidden through the soil, tree or dead leaves. The mycelium lives many years and only produces mushrooms under certain conditions, with water and temperature being the main factors. If conditions are perfect, mushrooms will ‘pop’ up in a complete circle around the parent mycelium, forming what’s called a ‘Fairy Ring’.

Camp is home to many mushrooms. The large puffball mushrooms growing on Hueniker Hill look just like misplaced volleyballs, and are one of the few wild mushrooms that a novice like me can identify – and eat relatively safely. Of course you know that some mushroom toxins may result in gastric upset or even organ failure and death. It’s always best to “look, but don’t touch”.

Camp even has some mushrooms that glow in the dark, which we call “glow-wood”. They produce light by a chemical reaction called bioluminescence, just like fireflies.

What would life be like without fungi? Well, in addition to the recycling loss to the environment, we would have no mushrooms to put on our pizzas, no breads (or pizza crusts) made with yeasts, and no beer or wine to wash that pizza down. Add to that the fact that we’d have no penicillin to fight our infections. True, there would be no molds or mildews, no athlete’s foot or yeast infections. But, as you know, in nature you’ve got to accept the good with the bad. Watch out for the bad, and enjoy the good.



“Fairy Ring” photo by Kevin Nordahl. His 6 year old son Kai lost his first tooth within the week and is convinced the ring is the tooth fairy’s primary portal into this dimension. Why not?



Interesting Mushroom Facts:

- Mushroom Soup is the second most popular Campbell’s soup - tomato is number one.
- Mushrooms are the nation’s second most popular pizza topping, right behind pepperoni.
- Rather than make seeds, fungi make spores. A single mushroom can make 16 million spores.
- 90% of a mushroom is water.
- About 2,500 varieties of mushrooms are grown for food.
- About 50% of mushrooms for eating in the U.S. are grown in Pennsylvania.
- 80% of mushrooms are eaten by 20% of the population.