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# NEWSLETTER

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Thanks To: Kendall Dowsett,  
Peter Drews, Laurie Spurrrier

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Wasn't that a great celebration of all things Minikani we had for the 100<sup>th</sup>? Hopefully you "came home" to Minikani in some special way this summer.

Unfortunately, Minikani's 100 years have overshadowed MAC's own 10 year celebration.

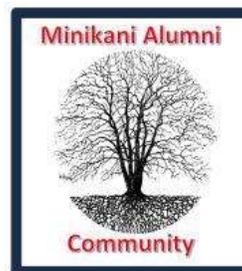
Saturday August 29, 2009. About a dozen people met in a hot Fireside Lodge that afternoon to talk about forming a group of former staff members interested in staying connected to camp. The genesis of the MAC. Two big questions came up: 1) what would the MAC be all about, and 2) would there be a fee to be a member. We continue to wrestle with the 1st question, but the 2<sup>nd</sup> one has been working out just fine. (No membership fee – anyone who ever worked at camp can become a member.)

In the last 10 years we have put together a community that works. Volunteers have set up a 503(c)(3) nonprofit corporation that has given tens of thousands of dollars back to Minikani.

We have a website, email, Facebook group, quarterly Newsletter, a governing board of directors and more. We've planned workdays and weekends at camp, holiday parties and other social activities for our members - reaching around the world. We've recruited dozens of scholarship kids who love camp as much as we do.

And we have you, our members. 460 to date. You are so important to our mission – to maintain our connection with our summer homeland. This group of former camp staff - all volunteers - wouldn't be possible without you.

Being a member means you belong. Keep committed, volunteer, work together, help each other, and be proud to be a member of the Minikani Alumni Community.



CELEBRATING



# Camp News

## Homecoming Campfire FRIDAY, October 25, 2019

Reconnect with summer friends and counselors at Minikani’s Homecoming! All 2019 campers, families, and staff are invited to return to their summer homeland for a campfire and other fun activities. This event is free for all 2019 families. Bundle up, bring a blanket, and hang out with friends and family. Children must be supervised by an adult at all times during the event.

### 6:00–8:00 PM SCHEDULE

- Welcome & Skits at Council Bluff
- Camp-inspired crafts & games
- Hot cocoa, S’mores, and a light dinner provided (hot dogs, chips, snacks)
- Movie (will be held outside on the big screen weather permitting)

## Cookie House at Minikani Saturday, December 7, 2019 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM

Take a break from the holiday rush and enjoy a fun, relaxing day at YMCA Camp Minikani decorating cookies and gingerbread houses with friends and family. They supply the decorating supplies and freshly baked cookies. You supply the creativity and leave the mess to them! Santa also makes an appearance for a special story time. Lunch is available for purchase.

For more information and to register go to camp’s website at <https://www.minikani.org/cookie-house/>

## Winter Camps at Minikani “A break well spent” December 27 – 30, 2019

At a time of year when most kids are inside, winter campers are having a blast tromping around in the snow and meeting new friends for four days and three nights. In addition to a handful of adventures at Minikani, campers will visit Sunburst Ski Area in Kewaskum, WI, where they can snowboard, ski or snow-tube. On their last night, campers and counselors celebrate “New Year’s Eve, Eve, Eve,” which is a camper-created carnival and dance party, culminating with a homemade ball drop.

<https://www.minikani.org/winter-camps/> for more information.



## Apple Tree Story

By Bruce

Minikani was purchased in 1919 and included 40 acres with 2 buildings, a barn and a farm house. Right next to the farm house was an apple orchard with a number of trees planted in the late 1800’s.

In 1924 an addition (Fireside Lodge) was built on to the original farm house and served as camp’s Dining Hall until 1973.

To make room for the Fireside addition about half of the apple orchard had to be sacrificed. I guess the saying “You can’t make an omelet without breaking a few eggs” has a corollary: “You can’t build a camp without cutting down a few trees.”

Over the next 50 years the remaining apple trees greeted campers on their way to and from the waterfront and provided ‘wormy’ ammunition for occasional apple fights. In 1974 the “New” Dining Hall was built up on the hill. The directors at the time felt the apple trees blocked their view of the lake from the new large windows, so again half of the remaining trees were cut down.

Since then apple tree rot, canker fungi and necrosis have taken their toll on the remaining aging apple trees. Today only a single apple tree from the original orchard remains.

I was both surprised and glad to see it at the 100<sup>th</sup> celebration. It shows its age, but this year it has produced lots of apples. While you can’t really call just one fruit tree an orchard, it serves as a reminder of what used to be.



Wikipedia says “If fruit trees are neglected, they stagnate.” I’m afraid that may be true for more things than just apple trees. Thanks, Minikani, for never stagnating and doing a great job to preserve our summer homeland. 

## Campership Kids

By Kendall Dowsett



These kiddos had an AMAZING week (or two!) at camp this summer!! The Spirit of Minikani is so alive within all of them, it just about moved me to tears. I am so grateful to the Alumni Community and to all our donors who have made it possible for these kids to return year after year, and especially grateful to Jon Fleming McLaren and Peter Drews for never turning me down when I want to “add just one more...please!!”

Camp is the highlight of their year, it’s given them community, challenged them to get outside their comfort zone, and helped them develop confidence that they could never learn anywhere else. I could go on and on and on about everything that camp has done for them, but I’d be preaching to the choir, right? So for now, THANK YOU.

P.S. I’m the one in the middle with the white T-shirt. 🏕️

## Special Offer

Membership on the MAC Board of Directors comes with great rewards. True, you will have to give up an hour or so every other month to join a conference call. You also will need to share your talents with others who care about your summer homeland as much as you do. But as a member of the board you will help steer the group by making decisions about policies and activities that will make a difference for all of us.

We will soon be accepting applications to join the MAC Board and hope that you’ll consider putting your hat in the ring. Remember all those Leadership skills you learned back at Minikani? Your leadership on the MAC Board will help ensure that it continues to be the best alumni group it can be.

Requirements for being a member of the Board? Simple: 1) you worked at Minikani, and 2) you want the MAC to continue to live up to its mission:

*“Through acts of fellowship and service, we strive to honor our past experiences, support current summer programming, and preserve Minikani traditions for the future.”*

Can we count on you?



# Minikani 100<sup>th</sup> Celebration



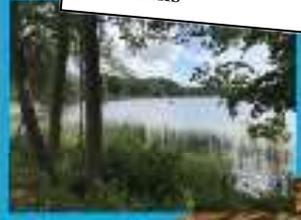
I can't begin to tell you all how full my heart is after a weekend back at our summer homeland. Thanks for everything. Love you all. Angie Wilson Krysiak



For me I think the depth of camp came from its balance: tons of fun paired with a focus on personal growth; a setting built for pushing physical boundaries, as well as mental and emotional ones; a culture of complete silliness but also a culture of true service to others. Heather Ullsvik Loomans



What an awesome couple days celebrating Minikani's 100th Anniversary with wonderful old friends and family!! Minikani was our 2nd home during the summers for many years, guiding us to our best selves and showing us the importance of loving one another. Trisha Chaimson



Minikani has been the underlying thread throughout my life. My best friends, my closest family, my wife and children, spiritual grounding, and endless love and laughter, all originating from the humble shores of Amy Belle. Perry LaRoque



Minikani has given me: a love for the outdoors, lifelong friends, and a love for kids, confidence, leadership skills and most important we were married at Minikani. Rob Tegtmeier



# Summer 2019

By Peter Drews

Dear Alumni Community,

It is somewhat surreal to be writing this article right now. As is always the case, summer came and went in a blur. With this being our 100<sup>th</sup> summer, the familiarity of the feeling (i.e., that summer has flown by) is particularly surprising. Shouldn't the 100<sup>th</sup> carry with it some extra weight, some distinction marked by historic significance?

The short answer is simply no. Summer #100 was much like any other summer. And "any other summer" at Minikani means that it was absolutely magical. In my three summers as the Summer Camp Director here, I'm getting accustomed to feeling like I've just experienced the best summer of my life each September. I'm sure there will come a time where a confluence of events leaves people feeling like maybe this past summer just wasn't the best. I feel incredibly fortunate to have never experienced that feeling. This summer was so good! Our staff was phenomenal. I don't know if I've ever seen a group that took ownership of the camp climate so thoroughly. They were empowered, and took full advantage to create lasting memories for kids.



Of course, there were a few special moments to celebrate 100 years of Minikani. We had a Minikani Timewarp day during 4<sup>th</sup> session, with different program areas themed after different decades in Minikani's history. Thanks to the alumni who came back to make that day extra special! We also had our 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration at the end of August. I don't think camp has ever seen a party quite like that one. It was amazing to witness the myriad reunions that weekend helped produce, and the joy that being together facilitated.

Let me tell you a little about what was different and new in 2019. Our biggest and most exciting change was the rebranding of our Girls Unit, which is now called the Trailblazer Unit. Each cabin is named after a trailblazing woman throughout history. Our staff did a phenomenal job of bringing the stories of those women to life for kids. And as always, a major core of the unit was and remained empowering girls to be whatever it is they want. They wore their new moniker with pride, and used it to create so much positive meaning.

Minikani as a physical space continues to evolve as well. We have a brand new shed in the Prairie for our Gun and Run staff (is it finished yet? Sure isn't. Does it promise to be much more comfortable than the old one? Sure does.), in addition to a new archery shed. We also tore down and replaced the old chart room. These new buildings are built by an Amish family that our Operations Director Eli Fyksen has a connection to, and are delivered by their Mennonite neighbors. It's hard to describe the simple excitement our counselors experience watching a brand new shed (from "Ed's Sheds") get



delivered (by "Safe Shed Delivery"). We also plan to move our two "chateaus" that live in the prairie behind the lodge to serve as staff housing for day camp counselors (goodbye to 6:30 AM walks from the Girls Unit!).

Trying to summarize the programming that took place through a summer in a newsletter article is kind of like trying to give a summary of American History in a class period. You're going to leave some pretty important stuff out. I'll try to pick out a few favorite moments so you can all have a little taste of what our campers and staff experienced. During 4B, our Girls and Boys Unit Directors (Hailey Proebsting and Sam Weber) brought Minikani alumnus Lucky Diop for a very special vesper in Pine Forest. We had a roaring fire, and Lucky led sing-alongs that featured staff on drums and many different groups of dancers. For the first time in 3 years, campers won the Runt Hunt.

*Continued next page*

One very small, very adorable young boy emerged from the disc golf course at the end of the game asking “did I win?” You sure did, little guy. It won’t happen again. This summer was also characterized by brand new evening activities. The one that stands out to me most was “Big Big Big Big Dice.” Our skill heads created 2 truly large dice out of saran wrap and PVC piping. The mechanics of the game are too complex for this update, but suffice it to say the one die was hauled into Norris Field on the back of a pick-up truck while the other was carried in by the entire Minicamp staff while “Welcome to the Jungle” blared over the PA. Camp went nuts.

Around the time this letter is published we will be hosting Camp SOUL (Supporting Others, Understanding Loss) at Minikani, a free weekend camp for kids who have experienced the death of a loved one. It’s a really special weekend. Our Homecoming Campfire is scheduled for October 25<sup>th</sup>, and provides an opportunity for campers and families to reconnect with Minikani staff, songs, and culture in the fall. We’ll also welcome 72 brand new LTs at Fall Weekend on November 9<sup>th</sup>, ushering in the next generation of outstanding leadership at Minikani.

Finally, Minikani will also be welcoming a new Summer Camp Director into the fold this Fall! Her name is Rachel Kornetsky, and she is AWESOME. Rachel spent three summers as a counselor, and was the Waterfront Director, Day Camp Director, Assistant Summer Camp Director, and Wellness Coordinator before taking on the Summer Camp Director role. Please join me in wishing her all the best, and giving

her an enthusiastic welcome. Go Rachel! We’re all so excited for you, and the amazing work you’ll do leading our community.



It has been such an honor and privilege to spend the past three years directing Minikani. I’ve learned so much, met so many incredible people, and made memories that will stay with me for the rest of my life. So cliché! But so very true. Thanks for all the support over these years, and for the support I’m sure you’ll continue to pour into our summer homeland.

One Final Time in the Spirit,  
Peter Drews



## RamblerFest

Friday August 23, 2019

What made RamblerFest such a great time for everyone? Was it the **music**? The Whisky Farm (Jason Horowitz), Life in a Tree (Molly Lutz), and Grace Weber? Or maybe it was the **venue**, hosted by Third Space Brewing (Andy Gehl), Majic Productions (Mike Jurken), Mansfield Hall (Perry & Sean LaRoque), and the Minikani Alumni Community (You!)? What about the **great beer** (Happy Place)? Perhaps it was the **DJ’s** (Sam Oiumet & Brett Andrews)? Was it all the **money** collected and donated to Minikani (\$4,000)?

The answer, you know, was all of these things plus one very important factor – all the people who were there. They were mostly Minikani people of all ages (over 21, of course). But there were lots of Grace Weber fans, friends of alumni, parents of alumni, and more. Thanks to everyone who made RamblerFest so special, and a big thanks to everyone who was there.



“Do you have a favorite camp memory?” “Do you know an Alumnus who we can ‘Spotlight’ in a future edition?” “Do you have questions about camp that we can research?” “Can you suggest a future topic for the Newsletter?”

You get the idea. This is your Newsletter – feel free to make a contribution. The next Newsletter will come out in January. Please give it some thought. Send your email to [minikanistafflodge@gmail.com](mailto:minikanistafflodge@gmail.com).



## Laurie Spurrier

Laurie recently published an article in the World Wildlife Magazine titled “[Stemming the tide - Our seas are transforming in unprecedented, life-altering ways. WWF is working to save them for us all.](#)” I caught up with her at Minikani’s 100<sup>th</sup> celebration.

◆ **What is your history at camp?**  
I was a 9 year old camper in 1971. I went through the LT program and was a counselor through 1982.



◆ **Didn’t you have a brother and sister who were also at camp?**  
Yes, camp was something we all shared and, to this, day, appreciated tremendously. Barbie (now we call her Barb) completed LT2. Greg is a camp romance story. He completed

LT3 and met his spouse at Minikani (Pat Poole) who was also in the LT program. They are married and have 3 grown children, all of whom were campers at Minikani.

◆ **Did you have a favorite camp job?**  
I had so many - starting with being a counselor. The satisfaction of having completed a successful session with a group of campers felt like such an accomplishment. I also relished my morning skill sessions on the waterfront teaching sailing with Lori Maihofer (who I saw at our recent reunion) and Nick Hayes. The thrill of opening a sail and letting the boat run was so much fun. I also liked capsizing (which I know I wasn’t supposed to do).

◆ **Any particularly ‘fond’ memories of camp?**  
I have so many wonderful camp memories. I cherished the Explorer trips on the Wolf and Peshtigo Rivers, and the freedom “being” in nature those trips presented. I can still visualize the camp sites, the river, and smell the air. Campfires, skits, and rag ceremonies are also memories I hold close, but nothing tops the memories of my friendships. Returning to camp for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary reunited me with wonderful friends including Sally Nelson, Laurie Hasbrook, Kathie Allard, and Lori Maihofer. It was also a treat to see Bruce Rasmussen and Greg Valde—2 people I really looked up to when I was an LT and counselor.

◆ **Were there any special skills you learned while at camp?**  
The leadership skills I developed while at camp undoubtedly contributed to my career choices and who I am today. My commitment and passion for community and the out of doors was solidified during

my camp years. Inspiring others to do something (e.g. the campers to clean the cabin and get to the flagpole on time) was a skill I honed and aim to deploy on a daily basis at work! Accountability and decision making were also skills I developed at camp and which I draw upon daily.



Assuming leadership roles, striving to lead by example, and seeking opportunities in my community to advance social change are part of my life today. As a parent I have often thought about what a responsibility I had as a counselor-- overseeing the happiness and well-being of young campers—and what a privilege it was. I have no doubt that my experience as a counselor has made me a better parent to my 2 wonderful daughters (Bryn and Zoe).

◆ **How did you make the transition from camp to the “real” world?**  
Two weeks after graduating from college I joined the Peace Corps. I went to Paraguay and worked as an agriculture extension agent. Many of my camp skills came in handy-- I lived in a rural area for 2 years with no running water and electricity, washed clothes in a river, and couldn’t be picky about what I ate, or complain about the heat, bugs or mosquitos!

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◆ **What are you doing now?**

I am Vice President of Oceans Conservation with the World Wildlife Fund. I've been working at World Wildlife Fund for more than two decades advocating for ocean conservation in some of the world's most important marine environments throughout Latin America, Africa and Asia. I am a Vice President in charge of developing and leading strategic partnerships, such as the Global Mangrove Alliance (GMA), a partnership dedicated to improving the outlook for imperiled coastal forests around the world by scaling up the most effective solutions to mangrove loss. (Follow us on twitter @ Mangroves. Or learn about the GMA at mangrovealliance.org.)



Since joining WWF in 1993, I have served as a Program Officer for the Northern Andes, Marine Director for the Latin America and Caribbean Program, Director for WWF's Galapagos Program, and Deputy Director for the WWF International Secretariat's Latin America and Caribbean Marine Program. I have the most amazing job-- I get to work in partnership with colleagues who have diverse backgrounds from all over the world.

◆ **Anything you learned at camp that helps with your job today?**

So many of the skills and interests I developed at camp are relevant to my work and life today. Notably flexibility, tolerance, and team building. As a counselor we learned early on how to build a team; every week we brought together a group of children or young adults who were strangers from different backgrounds, and worked to find common ground, build trust, support and respect each other, and create a shared community. All this experience is relevant in my job today building teams to define a shared vision and then developing and deploying a plan to achieve that vision. It's also relevant to my marriage, and the family my spouse and I have built together.

◆ **Any advice for younger alumni just starting their careers?**

Surround yourself with people who are nice, curious, well-informed, and who you respect and they, you. Stay true to your values. Engage in making your community and work place a diverse and inclusive place. And on the more practical side, networking is important for your career. Take time to listen and learn from the experiences of others. You can learn something from everybody even if you think you can't! And help others advance their careers.



Laurie Spurrer, Sally Nelson, Laurie Hasbrook 2019

◆ **Anything else you'd like to share with Minikani alumni?**

Stay in touch with your camp friends even if you are busy with your families and careers. You share something very special and you will appreciate the friendships in your days ahead! One of my closest friends is a fellow Minikani camp counselor alum— Nature Sally (Sally Nelson). She was my LT3 when I was a counselor, and that was 40 years ago.



Laurie and Sally 1980

# Nature Notes

By Bruce

## “Wisconsin Bivalves”

Maybe you’ve seen a bivalve at camp, in Amy Belle or Mud Lake. As their name suggests, they have 2 shells that they close tightly for protection with their whole body inside. They prefer to partly burry themselves amongst the rocks or mud at the bottom of the water. You’ve probably guessed it – Wisconsin’s bivalves are also called ‘clams’ and ‘mussels’.



The first question most people have about bivalves is “Are they edible?” and the second is “Do they have pearls?” More about the second question later in this article. If you look up “Are clams poisonous” on the internet you’ll get an answer that isn’t very calming: “They are usually not poisonous”.

Don’t worry – the state of Wisconsin has your back. They have made all forms of clamming, whether commercial or individual, strictly illegal. People can only take dead shells out of the water, no live clams at all. Whew. In the distant past people have eaten clams from Wisconsin waters, and they found them to be tough, chewy, and not very palatable. So we’re not missing much.

But the real problem with our clams is that they may contain high levels of dangerous chemicals. The reason is very simple: they are filter feeders. They have a siphon tube that constantly brings in water from the pond, lake, creek, river, swamp, etc. where they live. The water circulates around their gills and tiny food particles and microorganisms are filtered out and passed along to the clam’s stomach. The water then exits through another siphon, along with the clam’s body wastes.

Unfortunately, some of the waters in our state contain dangerous chemicals – pesticides and heavy minerals like mercury. That’s why you and I don’t go around drinking water right out of a lake, river, etc. These harmful chemicals begin to build up inside the clam. Siphoning removes many pollutants from the water and makes them a natural record of the pollutants in our water - but can also be fatal to the clams.

You’ve heard of the Gold Rush when people rushed to California to find gold and got rich. But have you heard of Wisconsin’s Pearl Rush of the late 1800’s? Actually, finding pearls in Wisconsin’s clams was just a byproduct of the Button Industry. Before plastic was used as it is today, buttons drilled from clam shells was a multi-million dollar industry on the upper Mississippi River from 1880 until 1940’s.



To make the buttons, clam shells had to be collected. Using a boat, a ‘clammer’ would drag a rod with perhaps one hundred hooks along the river bottom. The clams would snap shut on the hook and be caught. A boatload would fetch \$3. The clams were placed in water and boiled. The meat was removed, checked for pearls, and then discarded or sold for hog feed or used for dog and cat food. The shells were immediately sold to the button factories.



Pearls? You bet. But by no means was finding your own pearl an easy task. Typically, only one in 10,000 clams produce a high-quality pearl. Still, the chance at instant fortune outweighed the time and effort spent digging in the mud for clams. It is estimated that about \$300,000 worth of pearls were collected from Wisconsin rivers from 1889-1891 (\$8 million in today’s dollars).

Before you rush out to go pearl hunting, remember that all forms of clamming are illegal in Wisconsin. It’s best to leave the clams alone. Let them silently filter our waters and contribute to their own food chains as nature intended. 🏠

In the 1890's pearls were 4x more expensive than diamonds. The largest Wisconsin pearl was found in 1907 and weighted almost as much as a nickel (4.4 grams). It sold for \$15,000, which would be \$380,000 today.