



NEWSLETTER



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Thanks To: Alex Hushek, Kendall Dowsett, and John Hyland

Bruce Rasmussen, Editor
BruceRass@gmail.com

Big kudos to all the staff, parents, and campers for a successful summer camp this year. Having to deal with COVID, camp had a unique opportunity to let the Spirit of Minikani shine through. And shine it did. You can read two accounts of the summer on Page 2.

The rest of this Newsletter focuses on what the MAC has done in keeping with its Mission. Our six Campership Kids had a great time this summer, thanks in part to your financial support.

Our updated MAC Songbook is a real hit, thanks to Jeremy, Brett and Bruce. We welcome new staff at Minikani and invite you to its

upcoming Fall Festival, which gives you and your family a chance to return to our dear 'ole camp for a day. An interview with John Hyland may remind you of the friends you made at camp, and Nature Notes might help you remember the beauty of Minikani.

Finally, our Board of Directors meet regularly and keep coming up with different ways to support and be of service to Minikani. Thank you for your membership and participation in our events. Together we honor the time each of us has spent at Minikani.



Minikani Summer by Carrie Wall

Carrie Wall is the President & CEO of the Milwaukee YMCA

This summer 2,036 families entrusted the Y to safely care for their children during Camp Minikani's 102nd summer, as they grew in spirit, mind and body. Kids (and parents) needed camp more than ever this summer.

Our staff and volunteers are thrilled to return many of the programs that make Camp Minikani such a special place and community.

- ◆ Leaders in Training resumed for 136 teens to build leadership skills they'll rely on for the rest of their lives.
- ◆ The reintroduction of overnight camps for 1,023 kids.
- ◆ 5 Explorer trips including a week at Camp Minikani and a week in Rhinelander
- ◆ 2 Master Explorer trips sea kayaking in the Apostle Islands
- ◆ 2 Expeditions to hike Rocky Mountain National Park in CO.

From nervous day campers being dropped off at their first day of camp to confident teenagers leading Explorer trips, each experience at Camp Minikani is guided by our incredible staff who embody the Y's core values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility. And maybe a fifth - fun!



Minikani Summer by Alex Hushek

Alex Hushek is Minikani's new "Management Engagement Director"

Campers:

With over a year of being inside or not playing with all their friends, our campers came back swinging. Whether it was walking incredibly slow everywhere to look for four leaf clovers or screaming at the top of their lungs to accuse their counselor of farting in their cabins during Kangaroo Court, each kid was able to partake in the silly, crazy Magic of Minikani.



Staff:

Our staff were also in much need of another Minikani summer and were back on their skills all three hours. We prepped as much as possible for Runt Hunt and as always mapped out different sections of camp and screamed over the radios, "LOOK OUT CHRIS THERE'S A BIG GROUP COMING TO YOU FROM THE SWAMP!" But alas, in the end one single child emerged from the brush victorious (congrats to Maggie from Oconto!).



Programming:

A big change we saw this summer was the dining tent. Set up on the tennis courts, the tent was a controversial addition. I personally loved eating outside and the LTs and Kitchen Kathy were able to work their magic and still have everything run smoothly, but after a long time the spilled milk caught up to us and it did get a little stinky.

Summary:

All in all, it was an incredible summer that had its unique ups and downs but brought happiness and new friendships to campers and staff. It is good to see the Minikani Spirit endure the hard times and come out on the other side better than ever!



Fall Festival

Mother Nature and Minikani would both like to invite you and your family to Minikani for a day of classic Fall Festivities on Saturday October 24th 11:00-3:00.

They will have everything you need to get into the autumn spirit: A Caramel Apple Station, a Pumpkin Decoration Station, Hay rides, Pony rides, guided hikes around Mud Lake, Spooky Archery, Fall Crafts, AC (Adventure Challenge/Autumn Climbing), and a Fall photo station.

After a delicious lunch of chili and hot dogs made by our year round staff and the legendary Kitchen Kathy, camp will open up for all sorts of fun activities. And don't forget: Mother Nature will provide a colorful backdrop for your autumn visit.



If you are interested, please RSVP on their website under the 'events' tab. Lunch will be served at 11:30 – only \$5 per meal - pay at the door. Pumpkins are free! Call or email if you have any more questions!

262.251.9080 www.minikani.org



Friends of Minikani

An informational Zoom meeting of the Friends of Minikani and the Milwaukee YMCA was held on September 9, 2021.

You may remember that over the past nine months a group comprised of Friends of Minikani members, executive leadership, and board members from the Camp Advisory Board and YMCA Association Board met regularly to explore new ways of working that would achieve their major goal of maintaining a vibrant, successful camp with greater input from camp supporters.

As a result of these meetings, significant progress has been made, including the following:

- A new governance structure that will give Camp Minikani a greater voice at the YMCA's decision-making tables
- A higher level of reinvestment into Camp's aging facilities
- More clear direction on how to provide input in how Camp operates.



Minikani Alumni Community is a 501(c)(3) organization, independent from the YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee. <http://minikanistafflodge.com/>



Welcome Alex

Hi! My name is **Alex Hushek** and I'm the new Member Engagement Director at Minikani! I've been a camper, LT, counselor, and ad staff member, and have spent 11 summers at camp. I was the flex director this past summer, and love nothing more than going all out in a character for days or evening activities. In fact, as a second-year counselor I spent pretty much my whole summer as a wizard! I was also on the craft porch which inspired me to pursue Graphic Design at UW Madison and have used my skills to design the merchandise and publications used by Minikani.

The MAC Mission

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.

Camperships '21

By Kendall Dowsett

Hello Alumni!!! After a year away, we sent SIX very happy Chicago students to the BU and GU for two-week overnights and explorer sessions at camp this summer!! It was wild news to me, after being a camper and a counselor in Wild Wolf, to hear that WW was converted to a boy's cabin and Northwest Territory to a girl's cabin this year!! Ivan Romano was an explorer in Wild Wolf, and his cousin Nallely Torres was in NWT. Personally, I think having boys and girls in those centralized cabins on The Hill is an awesome idea, and hope to hear from the Explorer Staff of 2021 about how that went sometime soon! Nallely applied for the LT program, and Ivan is anxious to return next year as a Master Explorer. If Nallely doesn't get accepted into the LT program, she's already told me she'll be psyched to return for Masters as well!



As for the younger kiddos, they are not so young anymore!! Luis Torres (12), Yurem Mesa (13), Gabriela Martinez (12), and Damian Rivera (11) had a BLAST in their units this year. It was the first year that I asked parents to drive their own kids to camp to help minimize family mixing prior to opening day

and to help abide by Covid safety protocols, but I missed out on hearing all their stories firsthand!! While that was super sad for me, I got rave reviews from moms and dads after the session ended, and was so happy that the parents were able to see Camp in person for the first time after all these years.

In the past, we have always provided transportation to and from Camp on opening and closing days. This year we did not, but thanks to support from the Alumni Community we were able to provide each CHILD with a Visa gift card and each parent driver with an additional Visa gift card to help with gas driving to and from Chicago, provide lunch for each kid on the way to camp, and a little extra for the camp store or anything they may have forgotten at home. Without this financial support, I know it would have been a lot harder to get these kids to Camp this summer, so THANK YOU MAC members for supporting our Campership fundraising efforts. Not only are we sending kids to Camp who may not otherwise have the chance to go, but we're setting them up for success once they arrive, and that's huge!

As far as me, for those who do not know, my husband and I moved to Milwaukee last summer with our now 17-month old daughter. It was an incredibly difficult decision to say goodbye to the school that I loved working at for almost a decade, but it was the right choice for our family. This means that I don't have the same direct connection to a pool of students each year, and already this past summer I witnessed how hard it would be for me to continue selecting, enrolling, supporting, and pursuing kids for our MAC

Camperships. We should have had TEN kids at Camp this summer, but for those students with difficult living situations, hard-to-reach parents and other challenges, it was really hard for me to get the follow through when I wasn't able to track the kids down in person at school.

That's why the MAC will be launching a new initiative this year to connect with school leaders, teachers, and other program coordinators that have a direct connection to kids in the Milwaukee area so that we can continue sending a diverse group of youth to the Camp we all love. If you're interested in helping coordinate life-changing experiences for students in our city (or the surrounding area), please reach out to me at dowsett4@gmail.com or shoot me a text (262) 352-6280. It's been an incredibly rewarding experience for me over the years and I'd love to help anyone interested get started :)



Community Outreach

My name is Ursala Neuwirth, and I am the Community Outreach Chair for the MAC Board. One of our aims is to establish connections between Minikani alumni and the greater Milwaukee community by building relationships with charitable organizations and engaging in service throughout the community.

If you have any questions or concerns for me you can contact me through the MAC at minikanistafflodge@gmail.com.



Friends at Camp

When you were at camp, did you find it easy to make friends? Did you talk about these friends to your parents? Are you still friends with some of these people? Did you know that making friends is an important part of going to camp? In her Parent Blog, Audrey Monke, MA, makes the following case:

At camp, children are socializing with one another from the moment they wake up until the minute they fall asleep. They have time to internalize group social norms and learn appropriate social interactions by emulating counselors and fellow campers. Camp counselors, unlike teachers, view their primary role as one of facilitating friendships and positive experiences.

Survey: How many friends did you make at camp?

# Friends	% of campers
0	0%
1-3	14%
4-6	14%
7-9	19%
10+	44%



For a child who has grown up in the same neighborhood or gone to the

same school their whole life, camp may be the first opportunity to meet such a large number of new friends and interact with a diverse group of people. Campers get practice talking to new people, figuring out appropriate self-disclosure, and asking questions to get to know others.



Minikani Songbook

Have you downloaded the MAC Minikani Songbook from our MAC website yet? Click <http://minikanistafflodge.com/> to get yours. Lots of alumni were excited to get their copy. Here's what some of them had to say about it:

L.M. This is incredible. Cleared many cobwebs from my brain and brought me a lot of joy reliving such good memories. (I totally forgot about the sausage song. So funny.)

M.B. Thank you!!!! I sing my girls camp songs each night before bed and always forget some lyrics or wish I remembered more. So many good memories- what an awesome idea.

U. N. This is WONDERFUL! I love it so much.

K.O-R. Opened it during a break at school and had to refrain from singing out loud.

T.T. Outstanding! All the memories come flooding back like a tsunami of tunes! After 55 years, it all comes back to you like riding a bike. Thank you so much to the team that put this together!

D.V.S. Just took a peak - this is incredible. Great work!!!

K.D. This will be so fun to have as my daughter gets older—I now have so many songs I may have otherwise forgotten at my fingertips.

A.A. The songbook made my day and brought back so many wonderful memories.



Creepy Bird Calls

What kinds of noises do you consider to be “spooky”? Certainly a blood curdling scream, a creaky cemetery gate, a plaintive shriek and a wailing off in the distance all fit the bill.



With the Halloween season soon upon us, you might have some fun with the collection of “Creepy Calls”

put together by the Audubon Society.

They've put together 10 of the most unsettling nighttime notes, ghoulish groans, and banshee-like wails from across the bird world. One click will take you to their website where you can hear all of these creepy cries. If you scroll down on their website you'll be able to see the birds identified, and a click on each name will give you a picture and more information about these avian Halloween stars.



Feel free to invite them to your next séance, ritual, or haunted gathering. Lights on or off? – it's your choice.

<https://www.audubon.org/news/can-you-identify-birds-behind-these-creepy-calls?>



SpotLight

On Alumni

John Hyland

◆ **What is your history at camp?**

My camp history started in 1993. It was a unique session – I was in Northwest Territory at 10 years old and my counselor was Eric Peetz. Eric was funny and made us all feel comfortable. I specifically remember him asking Chris O’Dell, who must have been the LT Director because he was the lifeguard for swim check, to flex for all of us.

I didn’t pass my swim test, but that’s okay. I worked hard and passed it the next year. (Pats myself on shoulder...). Fast Forward 8 years – I was a BU counselor for 3 years and then spent an amazing summer on the Craft Porch misplacing my radio and finished as the LT Director in 2005.

◆ **What camp figure had the biggest influence on your life?**

Easy. Matt Gelb. I still see him and call him Tree, and I think he likes that. Tree made me absolutely fall in love with Camp Minikani. He will always be larger than life in my eyes, no matter how much time gets in between my final campfire and today.



John - Far right (Tree - Tallest)

◆ **What song, when you hear it on the ‘radio’, immediately makes you think of camp?**

Closer to Fine by the Indigo Girls. Performed by Allison (Auda) Wagner sometime in the mid-90s. A close 2nd is ‘Cecilia’ as it reminds me of the Hayes Twins (Myles and Drew) singing it at a campfire when I was probably 12.

◆ **What was your favorite meal at Camp? TACOS!!!**

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

Closing DAY! We knew the kids so well by closing day and every moment seemed so important – from lineup to skills to meals to songs to softball, etc. Everyone was on fumes and it was okay because it meant we left it all on the field.

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

I called Perry LaRoque while I was wrapping up college and said, what do I do? And he said ... well don’t leave camp. I realize now what he was saying – once you leave, you leave. So if you have even the slightest chance to add one more summer of memories, friendships and tacos – do it.

◆ **You’ve got kids and a family of your own now, and you live in Evanston, IL. Do you think your experiences at camp makes you a better husband/father?**

I hope so! Personally, camp made me the most comfortable with kids in the 7-12 range. My kids are 4 & 2, which were not ages, outside of a few minicamp sessions, that we received much exposure to. So I often think about 8-year old campers that were in my cabins, the issues they experienced, and how can I best prepare my kids to be happy at that age.



2002 after Minikani's Ultimate Frisbee Victory over Wowitan. John is 2nd row, center, in the blue shirt.

◆ **If you could go back in time and re-live just one Special Day at camp, what would it be?**

Final closing campfire of 2001 – the BU performed ‘And all that Jazz’. Directed and Choreographed by Dr. Mike Herman, this set off a series of 5+ years of stunning end of summer BU performances. We knew all the words.



Jen (wife) Hazel (4) Jack (2)



Nature Notes

By Bruce

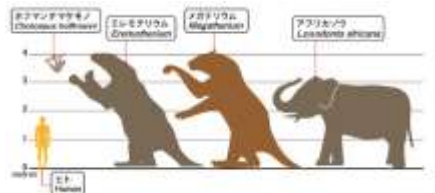
Osage Orange Trees - A Tree with a History

During the summer, you probably wouldn't even notice these thorny trees growing on the East side of Explorer Hill, along the Deer Path Trail. But when autumn comes, it's hard to not notice the large green fruits that have fallen to the ground.



About the size of a grapefruit, these are definitely not oranges. The tree is actually related to the mulberry tree. In fact, if you study an Osage orange, you easily imagine a softball-sized green mulberry. Pick one up and you'll discover that the fruits can be an awful mess with their thick, tough rind and lots of sticky, slimy, white sap. There are edible seeds inside, but you really have to work at to get to them.

These trees really have a history. Go back 10,000 to 13,000 years, and woolly mammoths, ground-sloths (both about 2X as tall as a human)



and other extinct mega-sized mammals ate the Osage orange leaves, twigs, branches and fruits, spreading seeds when they pooped.

The thorns were probably the tree's mechanism to protect itself from these ancient herbivores. The heavily rind protected some seeds from being chewed up, enabling them to live on once expelled with the animal's droppings.

Next go back just 500 years and early French settlers observed that the wood from the trees was used for war clubs and bow-making by Native Americans. Soon the wood was used to make the hubs and rims of wagon wheels. Its great strength enabled it to bear heavy loads, while its flexibility made it easy to bend into the circle of a wheel rim and absorb shock without cracking or splitting.

Before barbwire was invented in the 1880s, Osage orange trees created nearly impenetrable fence lines to hold livestock for early settlers. Thousands of miles of hedge were planted across the



Midwest and Great Plains. Farmers found the trees transplanted easily and tolerated poor soils, extreme heat and strong winds, with no

serious insect or disease problems. The trees created nearly impenetrable fence lines to hold livestock.

Finally, let's look at what the Osage orange is up to today. Many archers consider the wood to be the best wood for making bows. It is naturally decay resistant and is used as fence posts, insulators and insulator pins on telephone poles.



The wood is also prized for its heating ability. When dried, it has the highest heating value of any commonly available North American wood, and burns long and hot. The root wood and bark, and to a lesser extent the wood itself, have a great amount of yellow coloring that can be extracted in hot water and used as dye. Native Americans used this coloring, and in World War I the dye was used for khaki coloring.

Some say the oranges themselves can be used as an insect repellent, including being especially effective against spiders (which we know aren't technically insects). But not everyone agrees, including scientists. Perhaps leaving them outside your door will prevent some spiders from coming inside. I have picked up and smelled an Osage orange, so it's easy for me to make a decision. I'll stick to the DEET in my Off! Insect Repellent!

