



NEWSLETTER



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Thanks To: Alex Hushek, Eli Fyksen, Ryan Derus

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Welcome to the October MAC Newsletter. You know what that means – the “Holiday Parade” is about to begin. Sure, it starts slowly, with candy and costumes, then Thanksgiving quickly leads into the Grand Holidays with shopping, cooking, gifting, partying and lots of football. A couple days after the New Year you come to and realize it is 2024 and that there is no chance of slowing down now.

As you probably know, the MAC seldom slows down. In this edition you’ll find that we’re already planning for the Holiday Party and all the activities of the New Year.

Hopefully after reading this Newsletter you’ll be up to date with what’s been happening at Minikani and with the MAC, our plans for the future, and a better understanding of good camp practices.

“Life is a series of moments. The idea is to have as many good ones as you can.” You’ll never forget some of your Minikani moments. Time will pass, but let’s hope you will build on those memories and continue to support your Alumni Community with acts of “fellowship and service”.





SUMMER RECAP

By Alex Hushek



Minikani’s past summer was exactly what I was personally hoping it would be- typical. We had plenty of staff that gave campers a classic Minikani experience with afternoon dips in the lake, busy meals in the dining hall, and cozy evening campfires.

As someone who was a first-year counselor in 2018, it was tragic to see Minikani go through the pandemic and experience the changes that our programing had to make. But that was then and this is now. While walking around this past summer, I can confidentially say that the Spirit of Minikani is alive and well!



I’ve always felt that the Minikani Magic can be strongest when things take an unexpected turn, and that was very true during the Air Quality issues we had this summer. Although our campers were inside for a couple of days, our staff kept the Spirit strong.



A time when I saw the Minikani Magic truly thriving was our Centennial 1.65 Forest Festival. With some extra help from the Milwaukee Y, we adjusted our “festival day” to also celebrate the Milwaukee Y’s 165th Anniversary with a dunk tank, live music, cotton

candy, snow cones, hot dogs, a bouncy house, classic yard games, and a big crafts tent.

I am so proud of Minikani’s staff and all they did to give our campers a magical summer they will never forget!



Volleyball is back at Minikani! Because of COVID, the big white Dining Tent prevented using the area. This summer it was refurbished with new sand & net and became a very popular activity once again.



Reinvestments at Minikani by Eli

As you well know, our amazing staff are the heartbeat of Camp Minikani, keeping the Spirit of Minikani burning brightly for each generation of campers. The Camp Minikani Advisory Board, YMCA Executive Board, Camp Minikani and YMCA leadership staff have been working closely to make substantial progress in ensuring our 150 acres of scenic grounds and buildings shine like our staff.

During the last 3 years, our leaders have codified a process to reinvest a dedicated portion of Camp’s revenues into facility projects recommended by the Camp Minikani Advisory board. We’re seeing the fruits of this collaboration in the new Ropes Course and Explorer Hill KYBO building that opened this summer.

In the past two years there has been \$1,450,000 in investments; \$600,000 from the YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee which couples thee aforementioned reinvestment process, additional sources, and \$600,000 raised by our staff from YMCA of the USA in the form of grants.

Both projects opened to rave reviews this summer – allowing more campers to choose the high ropes course skill, take the course several times with varied challenges and include campers with diverse abilities. The Explorer Hill KYBO building has become a focal point of the Explorers Unit with its central gathering area. In addition to these large investments, we continue to tackle behind-the-scenes projects (new climbing equipment for the

Ropes Course, air conditioning in the Dining Hall kitchen, several large new equipment purchases, re-built volleyball court, etc.) that improve the staff and camper experience.

Please reach out to me with any questions about this reinvestment process. Stay tuned for more details on the Camp Minikani Advisory Board’s next exciting facility and program improvement project.

-Eli Fyksen
Executive Director





New MAC Board Members

A big “Thank You” to all the alumni who recently applied to join the MAC Board of Directors. Our Bylaws determine how many board members we can have on our “team” at any one time. As you may know, the Board meets every other month through video conferencing and makes all the decisions affecting the alumni community. Board members are volunteers who dedicate their time and talents to keep our MAC going. We welcome our newest members:

- ◆ Keri Robertson (1990)
- ◆ Morgan Cox Conti (2006)
- ◆ Chris Malicky (2013)
- ◆ Olivia Holbrook (2015)
- ◆ Will Caster (2016)

(The year after their name represents the year they were Leadership I’s.)

We’d also like to give an even bigger “Thank You” to those board members who are leaving the team. We couldn’t have done it without them ☺

- ◆ Kendall Dowsett
- ◆ David Van Sicklen
- ◆ Ursala Neuwirth



Do you have someone you would like to recommend for the “Spotlight on Alumni”? How about a Minikani Memory you’d like to share with us? Comments about the Newsletter? Send your suggestions and comments to minikanistafflodge@gmail.com

Save the Date

This year’s MAC Holiday Party will be held on Saturday, December 23rd. This annual event will once again be held at Third Space Brewing in Milwaukee. We welcome all Minikani alumni, their families and friends – as long as they are 21 or over. Early Bird tickets will soon be available to purchase online. Please join us for a fun time. More information will be shared with members through email, Facebook, Instagram, and our website.

Calendar of MAC 2024 Events

You can “pencil in” these activities and their dates next time you update your 2024 calendar:

March 2, 2024: “**Minikani Around the World**” Celebrate your connection to camp by getting together with other alumni right where you live.

May 1-31, 2024: “**MAC May Giving Month**” Help support the MAC with your gifts so we can continue to give back to Camp Minikani.

June 12, 2024: “**Alumni Invited to Staff Training**” Let’s hope that alumni are once again invited to meet the new Summer Staff during an evening of Staff Training.

August 24 & 25, 2024 “**Alumni Weekend**” It only comes around every other year – this is the year! For two days alumni get to ‘take over’ camp on the last weekend of the summer, doing fun camp things and having a great time with camp friends and families.

December 21, 2024 “**MAC Holiday Party**”. That’s right – celebrate the holidays once again with your camp friends.

Lessons from Camp

While summer camp is a time for kids to have fun away from the pressures and responsibilities of home and school, it's not all about making s'mores and sleeping under the stars. Camps teach resilience, independence, and problem-solving skills that benefits them during their camp years and beyond.

As you read below, see how many of these lessons you learned while at Minikani as a camper and a staff. Are these the things that make camp a great place for people?

Building Resilience

Trying new things and getting out of your comfort zone often results in ups and downs, allowing kids to learn how to deal with setbacks. Whether it's learning to work as a team, maneuvering a capsized canoe, or dealing with homesickness, camp teaches kids to be resilient when faced with difficult situations such as the following:

◆ **Facing adversity:** Many kids face challenges they've never experienced before at camp, teaching them to find comfort in uncomfortable situations.

◆ **Embracing failure:** Nobody's perfect, and failing is a part of life. No one hits the bullseye during archery or starts a fire on the very first try, allowing kids to get into the habit of falling down and getting right back up to try again.



◆ **Developing coping strategies:** When kids are at camp, they're away from the comforts — and expertise — of their closest family and friends. Because of this, they can develop skills in perseverance, adaptability, and teamwork.



Fostering Independence

Kids spend a lot of their life around their parents or other adult figures like guardians or teachers, meaning they likely have little opportunity to branch out on their own. Camp allows for this in a safe and supportive environment with some of the following examples:

◆ **Decision-making skills:** Whether it's choosing what they want to have for dinner from the camp buffet or signing up for activities, kids have a lot of decisions to make at camp.

◆ **Self-care:** Without their parents around to remind them, kids have the freedom — and the responsibility — to maintain proper personal hygiene, keep a clean cabin or tent, and ensure they're ready to go each day.

◆ **Teamwork:** Camp is all about independence when it comes to kids being away from home. However, it's also about teamwork, whether it's ensuring their bunkmates all pitch in to pass their cabin inspection or their larger unit working together to finish an activity or win a game.

Improving Problem-Solving Skills

Challenges big and small are bound to come up while kids are away at camp, giving them the perfect opportunity to improve their problem-solving skills — and learn from any mistakes — such as the following:

◆ **Critical thinking:** So many camp activities involve this crucial skill, whether they're out on a hike or are strategizing to win a game.

◆ **Communication:** With lots of kids living all in one place during the camp session, the opportunities to practice communication skills are everywhere! Kids work through conflicts, collaborate on projects or activities, and learn to express their ideas and feelings during this time.

◆ **Resourcefulness:** The great outdoors is the perfect place for kids to learn more about being resourceful because there may not have all the convenience or resources they're used to at home. Whether it's making arts and crafts with found objects around camp or building a shelter during an overnight camping trip, kids will learn to think outside the box.



Material for this article was found in a blog sponsored by ACTIVE Network's Camp & Class Manager software at the ACA website.



Pranks at Camp by Bruce

What is a “Prank”? One definition I found says “a practical joke or mischievous act.” Another says “a trick that is intended to be amusing and often to make someone look foolish.”

Almost every ‘Going to Camp’ movie I’ve seen includes campers having a grand old time playing pranks on the nerdy kid, the ‘Other Cabin’, or the counselor that everyone hates. They make it look like fun to wake up with honey poured all over your bed, your toothbrush covered with shaving cream, or smelling dead fish under your bunk.

Unfortunately, camp pranks can quickly turn into malicious acts that hurt people and property. It might seem like fun to the person pulling the prank, but it’s never fun for the person on the other end.

OK, I know I just sound like an old grouch. I wonder - is it possible that playing pranks at camp can really have a positive function? Are there any good reasons why a counselor might want to encourage a prank or two during a session? Here’s what I came up with, thanks to a google search:



◆ **Camp is a time to let loose and have fun.** Kids are away from their parents and teachers for a few weeks, and they’re looking for ways to let off steam. Pranking is a harmless way to have fun.

◆ **Pranks help to build camaraderie.** When campers pull pranks on each other, they are bonding and creating memories that they’ll cherish for years to come. It’s a way of showing that they care about each other and that they’re willing to have a laugh at each other’s expense.

◆ **Pranks can break up the monotony of camp life.** Camp can be a lot of fun, but it can also be a lot of work. Pranks are a way to add a little bit of excitement and spontaneity to the day. They can also help to relieve stress and make camp feel more like a vacation.

◆ **Pranks are a way to express creativity.** Kids are naturally creative, and pranks are a great way to express that creativity. They can come up with all sorts of clever and original pranks that will make their fellow campers laugh.

Of course, it’s important to make sure that camp pranks are harmless and don’t cross the line into being mean-spirited. The goal is to have fun, not to hurt anyone’s feelings or destroy anyone’s property. Here are some tips for pulling off harmless camp pranks:

1. Make sure your prank is appropriate for the age group of the campers.
2. Don’t target anyone specifically.
3. Don’t damage any property.
4. Be prepared to laugh at yourself if your prank backfires.
5. Be prepared to apologize.
6. Help with any necessary clean up after the prank.

Personally, I think fireworks should never be used in a prank. Neither should live animals - or dead ones for that matter. Any prank that involves physical injuries, damage to property, emotional distress, or putting anyone’s safety at risk shouldn’t be considered. The best camp pranks should be light-hearted and not mean-spirited.



True Confessions

I was involved in a prank when I worked at Minikani. It was the end of the summer and a bunch of us were getting things ready for the Staff Banquet. That year we included a “Salad Bar”, something that was pretty new to most of the staff – it was the early 80’s. In addition to the small bowls of croutons, shredded cheese, and nuts for their salads we decided to add a bowl of hamster food from the Nature Lodge. Turned out, nobody questioned the addition and some even seemed to enjoy the whole-grain treat!

“I would be true, for there are those who trust me”



Ryan Derus

◆ **What is your history at Camp?**

I started at Minikani in 1995 as an 8 year old. The first couple of years I went with school friends but eventually started going by myself because I liked making new friends at camp. I tried all the skills at camp when I was a camper, but I loved skin diving and all the range skills. I spent my last summer 14 years later when I was 22.

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

My last job was my favorite – being one of the EU Directors. It was amazing to see new campers come in every two weeks, most of them meeting each other for the first time during opening day, and then leaving as close friends.

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

Gwen Stefani’s “Hollaback Girl”. When it comes on the radio, I have vivid images of Matt Sullivan screaming B-A-N-A-N-A-S at the top of his lungs running to the pool with all of his campers roughly behind him because they were late for the swim test.

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

Being able to receive and provide constructive feedback. This has been important as I’ve progressed through my career after camp.

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

Transitioning into the *real* world from camp wasn’t very difficult. Every team I was on reminded me of a cabin of campers so interactions came naturally. I was shocked how well the different techniques we were taught/used with campers could be applied to the interactions with my adult coworkers.

Currently, I work for Ascension Health nationally as a Director of Data Analytics. My team provides data, dashboards and analyses for strategic initiatives across eleven markets.

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

Invest in professional relationships early and continue to nurture them as you progress through your career

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

My closing campfire as a LT3. Being proud as I walked in with the BU with possibly my last cabin at camp. Being grateful for everyone in my LT3 group as we stood in front of CB. A level of happiness I’ve only experienced a few times in my life from all the cheers from everyone who filled CB. I still get goosebumps to this day when I think about it.

◆ **As a relatively new father, do you think camp has helped to make you a better parent?**

Yes. Understanding the importance of staying positive early on, and throughout my tenure at camp, has been vital to my experience as a parent. Staying positive translates into a sense of calmness for my daughter when she might be frustrated or translates into a darn good time when we play

outside. A lot of things are out of your control but a positive attitude is one thing you can control.

◆ **Anything else to share?**

Think about your favorite spot at camp. Close your eyes and go there for 10 seconds. Let those memories and feelings remove any stress from your day. You can always be at camp wherever you are, even if it's only for 10 seconds.



Ryan, Neve, Evelyn & Brian Siegel



Evann (Schwerm), Ryan, Neve



Neve, Ryan, Tanner & Mike Jurken

Nature Notes

By Bruce

What is an “Apiary”?

If you look in a kennel, you’ll see dogs. Look in an aviary and you’ll see birds. What will you see in an apiary? If you’re expecting to see apes, you’d be disappointed. An apiary is “a place of bees”. The name is taken from the scientific name of the honey bee, *Apis mellifera*. At one time Menomonee Falls had the largest apiary in Wisconsin, but years ago Honey Acers moved to rural Neosho.

Over 70% of the honey consumed in the US comes from other countries. The top three foreign suppliers are India, Vietnam, and Argentina. We still need plenty of honey bees in the US to perform a very important service – pollinating our crops. They pollinate \$15 billion worth of crops in the United States each year, including more than 130 types of fruits, nuts, and vegetables.

Most people don’t know that our honey bees are not native to North America (although today they are established as ‘naturalize’). European colonists brought honey bees to our east coast in 1622. Slowly they moved with the colonists and made their way westward. They reached Michigan by 1776 and Missouri, Indiana, Iowa and Illinois by 1800

In the next 20 years or so, bees continued on their way to Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas, and finally to Wisconsin. Mormons took them to Utah on the back of a wagon in 1848. After 231 years they arrived in California and the west coast in

1853. It was botanist C. A. Shelton who brought them by boat from the Atlantic, carried on a wagon across Panama, and then on another boat in the Pacific to California.

Bee Stings

For most people, bee venom is not toxic and will only cause local pain and swelling. But about 2 million people in the US are allergic to bee stings and are at risk for an anaphylactic shock if they are stung by a bee or wasp.

For the bee that stings you, it’s a different story. 100% of them will die from the sting. When the bee flies away after stinging a person, the stinger, which has tiny barbs on it, remains in your skin. Organs of the bee’s gut are pulled and detached, effectively disemboweling it. The bee, now with a hole in its abdomen, will soon succumb to fluid loss and internal organ failure.

So why do they sting us? Honey bees use their stingers strictly for defense. Any ‘foreign’ bee that tries to get into the hive will be stung to death. Bees that are away from the hive foraging on flowers will rarely sting people unless they are stepped on or unnecessarily aggravated. If a bee lands on you, gently blow on it to make it fly away. In most cases, bees will choose flight over fight.



Honey Bee Facts

- ◆ A honey bee beats its wings 11,400 times per minute. This makes the buzzing sound.
- ◆ A bee has five eyes, two large compound eyes and three smaller light sensitive eyes in the center of its head.
- ◆ Bees cannot see the color red. But they can see other colors in the ultraviolet spectrum that humans can’t.
- ◆ A single bee can produce 1 tablespoon of honey in its lifetime.
- ◆ One ounce of honey would fuel a bee’s flight around the world.
- ◆ Bees can fly up to 12 mph. On every foraging trip, a bee will visit 50-100 flowers to collect nectar.
- ◆ If you could get 4,000 bees to sit on a scale, together they would weigh just one pound.
- ◆ Bees heat and cool their own hive to keep it between 93 and 95 degrees year-round.
- ◆ An average hive has 50,000 to 60,000 worker bees and just a single queen.
- ◆ A Queen Bee will lay 800,000 eggs in her lifetime. She only leaves the hive once in her life in order to mate.
- ◆ Bees are very tidy. They groom each other and keep their hive incredibly clean. They would probably get ‘cabin clean-up’ every day!