



Summer 2016
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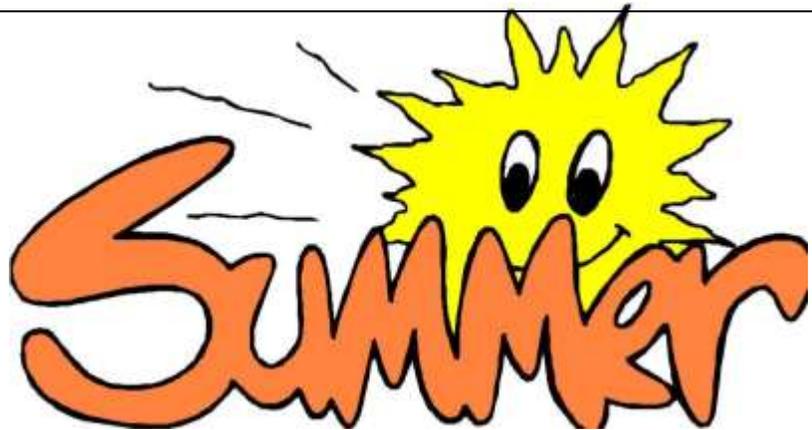
NEWSLETTER

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Thanks To: Kendall Dowsett,
Amanda Hedrickson, Andy
Mendelson, Kevin Wright, and
August Herschede

Bruce Rasmussen, Editor
BruceRass@wi.rr.com



“And so with the sunshine and the great bursts of leaves growing on the trees, just as things grow in fast movies, I had that familiar conviction that life was beginning over again with the summer.”

—F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

I think you’d agree that summer at Camp Minikani is a special time in a special place. With it comes promises for new ‘beginnings’ in so many ways. It begins with Staff Training, which quickly leaps into the first session. But each session that follows, each new skill that is learned, and each camper’s arrival is actually a new beginning. A bear claw, a rag, a campfire, and a vesper are ‘beginnings’. A new friend is a

beginning. As we look back at our times at Minikani, we celebrate all the ‘beginnings’ we had.

Many alumni have taken the opportunity to revisit this place of ours where it all began, and they’ve come away smiling. So much of what we remember happening at camp continues this summer. Is there any wonder that our Mission Statement includes these three goals: We strive to honor our past experiences, support current summer programming, and preserve Minikani traditions for the future.

Thanks to everyone who makes this possible, and thanks to those at Minikani today who continue to make new ‘beginnings’ for kids and staff alike.



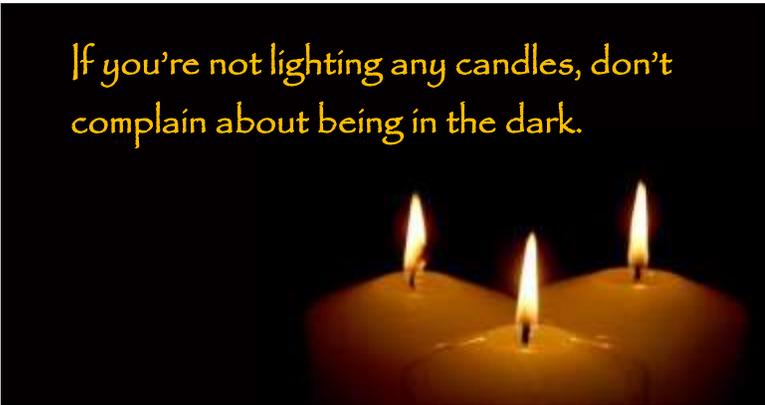
Staff Training

2016

About 20 alumni made it back ‘home’ to Minikani on June 15th this year. It’s always a great time, but this year was a little different. First of all we joined the staff for a picnic dinner above Norris field where we got to informally ‘chat’ with the ever-exuberant counselors, LT III’s and Ad Staff.

Then we moved over to Council Bluff and introduced ourselves to the applauding staff, including telling them where our favorite place in camp was. We broke up into smaller groups after that and each group went to those favorite places to share memories and answer questions.

We finally ended up back at CB again, and Myles Hayes and Mike Kodner lead us in song. After that alumni were invited to spend some time together at Cabin 20. It was a privilege to spend time with the Minikani Staff and feel just a bit of their enthusiasm for the 9 weeks of Minikani camp ahead of them.



Our Camp Minikani experiences have involved many fires – think of all the campfires we enjoyed, from an intimate cabin campfire the very first night of a session to the grand Opening and Closing campfires enjoyed by everyone. We had campfires when we camped and cooked out, Unit campfires during our weeks, and campfires in the wilderness Up North. Oh, the fun we had and the hours we spent sitting around a campfire.

The same flames showed up on candles lit at camp – vesper candle or a candle for a rag ceremony. As we celebrate the summer, let’s remember our campfire experiences and follow Shakespeare’s advice in *The Merchant of Venice*: “How far that little candle throws its beams! So shines a good deed in a naughty world.”



You only have 3 more opportunities to attend a Campfire this summer. 8/5 (Closing), 8/8 (Opening), and 8/18 (Closing). Please contact [Jon Fleming McLaren](#) or [Tom Cramer](#) if you would like to attend, have any questions about the campfires, or if you want to help out with skills, have a meal, or just visit. Camp always loves alumni visitors!



Ivan at Camp

By Kendall Dowsett

(Editor's Note: Ivan was a 1-week camper, one of eight kids sponsored by the MAC Campership Program.)

Hello Alumni!! A few weeks ago, my student Ivan Romano got a chance to experience Minikani for the first time. After having Ivan as a student for two years in a row, in 2nd grade and then again in 3rd grade, I knew this kid would LOVE the Minikani experience.

Ivan has ADD/ADHD and is medicated daily during the school year so that he can be successful in a general education classroom. While Ivan has excelled, he has expressed to me multiple times how much he dislikes his "pill." He's told me, "it makes me feel like a zombie" and "it makes me feel tired." Ivan has become a very special little person in my life since we met years ago, and giving him the opportunity to go to camp and just be IVAN was something I knew I had to do. So, that's what we did!!

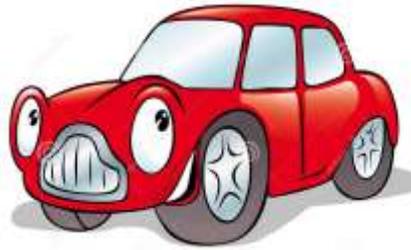
Ivan's mom and grandma were so excited to see him off on Sunday morning as we loaded him up (crying and clawing at his grandma) in to my car. Oh yes, it wasn't a pretty scene leaving Ivan's house but as soon as we got on the road, the tears dissipated and the questions began: "What will I do there?" "Who will be in my cabin?" "What happens if there's a tornado? A

hurricane? An earthquake?"

(Editor's Note: Please see page 5 "Wind Storm".)



After explaining why hurricanes and earthquakes are not feasible natural disasters in Wisconsin, it was all excitement until we rolled in to 875 Amy Belle Rd. And for me, what a special experience!! More than a student, Ivan's like a nephew to me, and rolling over those hills looking out over the farmlands with him in the passenger seat brought me right back to my first summer as a camper.



We were the fifth car in line, and got a chance to stroll along the lake before heading back towards the BU to check in. Talk of Belunda and Ed Foot riddled my ears as we grabbed his bag and waited for the Bugle Boy to let us know it was time. And then, at 2:00 sharp, off he went!! Running to Cabin 14 the same way generations of boys have done before him, except this boy was new to the woods, new to this place we call home, new to the traditions that have lived for decades before him.

I was SO excited for him to experience it all. I had tried my best to give him a heads up on everything that was in store for him, but while I watched him take off past the KYBO and around the corner towards Lazy B I could only think of all the things I wanted him to tell me about on Saturday when I picked him up. And did he ever...like I said in my Facebook post to the Alumni Community on the day that I drove him home, the magic of Minikani was absolutely oozing from his every pore. "We are the pioneer, delegation, when we

shout with..." resonated through my car as we hit the highway. "Now you go!" he said to me, and then it was my turn: "Indians strong! Indians proud!" we cheered our way towards Chicago, accompanied by a recount of every LT and counselors name that he could think of, and a rendition of each song and chant that was sung after dinner, or before the closing campfire, or during skills.

Everything that happened that week was imprinted on this little guy's mind, and his heart. "Can we sign up for two weeks next year??" he asked me with hopeful eyes as we passed the BU tent, and I promised him we would. Good luck, summer staff 2017!!! :) Thanks for making my buddy a believer in the Spirit of our Mama Minikani!!!



White Ragers

8 staff members are included in the challenge of the White Rag this summer. One ceremony was held in July and another in August to accommodate everyone.

Congratulations to the newest White Ragers:

July 24th

Rachel Whaley
Michael Rooney
Ryan Ballentine
Keegan Hasbrook

August 7th

Max Leonhardt
Matt Kolb
Oliver Wierdsma
Gordy Goetz



You Can Go Back

By Amanda Hendrickson

White ragger in the GU? What? Nope, not the Girls Unit Director. An alumni counselor! A few weeks ago, for session 1A, I had the incredible opportunity of being a counselor in the Girls Unit for a week. During the weeks leading up to my comeback I thought to myself, "What have I gotten myself into? I haven't been a counselor in six years!" I was just hoping that having three years of teaching under my belt would help me relax! Once all the campers arrived I realized that it was just like riding a bike – it all came back to me! I arrived at camp a little early, prior to the 10 o'clock staff meeting at Council Bluff to move all of my belongings into Dakota, or cabin 4. I set up my bunk, put back on my 2012 staff shirt, and I was off to begin another week at my summer homeland.

To be honest, I was a bit nervous to be the 26-year-old counselor with all the youngsters. Fortunately, Tom Cramer and I are the same LT year, and many of the other counselors I had as LTs when I was the LT director in 2012. With that being said, the staff excitedly welcomed me for the week! My nerves started to ease and I was ready for the week to begin!



During opening day I quickly realized some things never change – the lines for the nurse and pool are always long, lice checks are the best head massages, and always do your cabin photo before the swim check so the kids don't look like wet dogs in the picture. The cheering at dinner was the one thing I had a hard time keeping up with - I ran out of breath fast!

With the first day under my belt I knew I was in for one great week. I had the privilege of being on the WSA skill and was able to show campers how to build fires, catch frogs, lash, and whittle, among many other things.



By Tuesday I was already exhausted and hoping to get to bed right after vesper. Hopeful was the key word. Now I remember why I was always up until midnight when I was at camp – between socializing with staff, takeover day evals, and preparing for the next day, I was lucky to even be lying in my bunk prior to midnight.

On Wednesday night I had my campout at my favorite spot on camp, Range East. I made sure to get the best campout dinner, pita pizzas, and that my girls collected lots of wood so we could have a fire burning all night long. On Thursday

night I had the opportunity of leading the Bear Claw ceremony, which was followed by a staff affair and the dreaded night of camper reports. On the last night we had the girls unit campfire accompanied by the infamous "how well do you know your counselor". I was impressed with how well my girls got to know me over the week!



Did I mention how amazing my cabin of girls were?! Amazing is an understatement! I had a cabin full of seven, nine and ten year olds who were energetic, creative, unique, polite, caring, and open to do anything! In fact, the one activity they ALL requested we do for the week was roll around in the mud! I made seven new best friends that week. I was also paired with an awesome LT3!

All in all, I was constantly reminded of what brought me back to Mama Minikani summer after summer. Yes, I had the opportunity of making candles on the craft porch, playing avenging angles, and jumping on the trampoline, but the one thing that still made my heart so full after all these years was the spirit of Minikani. I had a hard time leaving after that week – I wanted to stay for the whole summer! Thanks to Tom and Rachel for thinking of me and having me back for a week. If you ever get an opportunity to go back to camp for an experience like this, don't pass it up! You'll regret it if you do!



Wind Storm

Minikani - 1991

It was an ordinary Sunday 2B afternoon 25 years ago. New campers had arrived and were busy with Opening Day activities. The two week campers – Explorers and about 6 Pioneer and Indian cabin - were enjoying their “Special Day”, some kind of Commando Day that involved water balloons and running around Pine Forest. I stopped in the kitchen to see what Ethel had cooking for dinner. “There’s a storm headed our way” she said.



be pretty strong.”

She kept a weather radio in the back of the kitchen. “Could

I thought about all the kids and staff at Pine Forest. Maybe I should cancel the Special Day and have the campers return to their cabins. I thought I’d better check with Stew Brown, the Camp Executive. He was working on some project just outside his house, Brown Lodge. He also had a radio turned on. I no sooner asked him what he thought we should do, when a strong wind and pelting rain came out of nowhere. We ducked into the lodge, and thunder, lightning, and 90 mph winds surrounded us. About 5 minutes later, it was all over.



Andy Mendelson, BUD, remembers being on the hill in the program office when rains started and the winds picked up. He ran down the hill to Kossow to make sure the LTs were down in the basement. Instead, they were all sitting in front of the large windows in the living room watching the storm roll in. He quickly hurried them down to the basement. They went, though several of them proceeded to stand in front of the windows on the lower level, rather than moving to the more protected area of the basement further back.



After the storm blew over, Andy remembers walking around camp, amazed at the damage to trees. The large one on the lake side of Fireside Lodge had always seemed to be a permanent fixture there. Now it was ripped apart at the base, laying on its side. Similarly, boats and rafts had been blow down the lake. Despite all the damage to the camp, no one was hurt.

For **Kevin (Fathead) Wright,** it was his first day ever at Minikani - a 1st year camper.

“I was 9 and had just gotten dropped off. I remember having to go back to our cabin part way through opening day (I was in Cabin 15 with Drew Maxwell as my counselor) and crawl under those old metal bunks. We sat under there while the wind whipped around the cabin. We could hear trees falling down. I remember



water started coming in under the door and the kids in the bunks by the door had to move under bunks of other kids, now putting 3 or 4 9-year-olds under each bunk. The whole time, Drew was standing up watching out the cabin door yelling and laughing.”

“After the storm, we all walked around camp to survey the damage. A lot of really large old trees had come down including one on the lake side of Fireside. This would be the "meet at the stump after these announcements" stump that stood for a number of years and was frequently used after password.”



August Herschede, a 1st year counselor in 1991, shared the following memories:

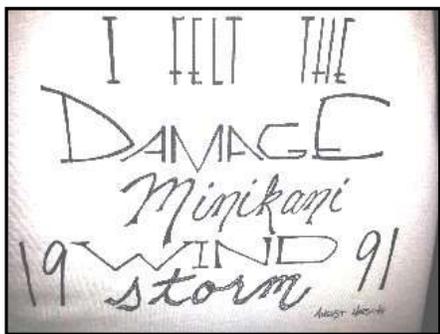
“I remember that it was Civil War day and the sky developed an ominous looking deep yellowish green. Without the aid of any radios, it was difficult to communicate a plan and even more difficult to account for everyone's safety. When the sky turned toward us like a paranormal haunt, we knew it was time to seek shelter.”

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“Despite all the damage to the camp, no one was hurt.”

Wind Storm Continued:

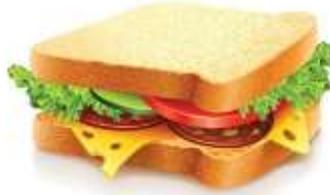
“We were in the boys unit and rallied everyone to the Kybo. We put girls on one side, guys on another, and kept asking counselors if they had all their campers. A handful of counselors decided to run a sweep through the remote areas which were holding flags for the civil war game. I remember running from the Kybo past Cabin 13 (Diamond G) along the path toward Explorer Hill.”



“As I got past the cabin, I stopped in my tracks from the cracking of tree. I watched an enormous tree thud right across the path to the hill and the range. The trunk was so big that I had to climb over it. I remember thinking that was pretty scary and dangerous, so I continued running with my head up looking at trees for movement. We encountered very few campers and nobody was trapped or injured. I don't remember the storm lasting too long, and ultimately, everyone was accounted for. Aside from cutting and removing several fallen trees for the rest of the session, one on top of

cabin 4, I don't remember things going very differently.”

Actually, the next 4 days camp was without electricity – no lights, no water, no bugles. Ethel kept us fed with lots of sandwiches and meals served on paper plates.



Activities went on as usual. Water was brought in for drinking and flushing toilets. Candles and flashlights lit up the cabins at night.

At the end of the session, every camper and staff got an “I Felt the Damage” T-shirt designed by Drew Maxwell and August Herschede.

Safety measures and tornado drills practiced by staff over the years had certainly paid off with no one being hurt. On the plus side, we had enough firewood to last us a decade. And starting the very next year, all Ad Staff carried walkie-talkie radios to insure communication during an emergency.

Kevin Wright again: “Flash forward to summer of 2008. I did a password on my last ever morning of camp where I put on (just about) every camp T-shirt I ever owned and took them off one at a time and shared a memory of each. The last shirt was that one and Drew was nice enough to come out to camp and share the memory of that storm with everyone and send me off. It was a great full-circle moment.”



Email:
minikanistafflodge@gmail.com
Website:
minikanistafflodge.com



Hey Alumni: You can now order Minikani Alumni T-shirts, sweatshirts, caps, kid's clothing, mugs, and lots of other stuff. Go to the MAC website to access the Camp Store.

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? Ideas for our next campership fundraiser? What else have you got for us? (We even accept criticisms.) Send your suggestions and comments via email. Thanks!

SpotLight On Alumni

By Erik Herbst



Erik first went to Minikani in 1992 as a camper. He was on staff for 8 years from 1997-2004, working as counselor, Wrangler, and Explorer Unit Director. He contributed the following answers to my questions:

◆ **Do you have a favorite place at camp?**

My favorite place at Minikani is Explorer Hill. As a Boy's Unit camper I remember longing for the day I'd get to march up the hill with the older kids who went on a trip. I remember sleeping in Hudson Bay as a camper when a huge storm moved through overnight. The old cabins were pretty exposed with only mesh screen making up a section of the exterior walls. The sound was amazing. Honorable mention goes to a place that is no longer, the Half Rafter Corral.

◆ **Any particularly 'fond' memories of camp?**

I have so many fond memories of camp, but here are some from each stage of my time at Minikani:



As a camper I was determined to survive the camper hunt only to be discovered by Matt (Tree) Gelb. I'm sure it was against the rules, but I was up to my eye balls in muddy water when this giant counselor wearing a BC hat came trudging through and tagged me.

As an LT, my LT Director Drew Maxwell spent an entire night talking to me (1 on 1) about the rag program when I was unsure about whether I wanted to continue it.

As a counselor, my first staff training, the entire staff slept out in Norris Field under the stars. It was a great bonding experience and instantly made me feel included as a staff member.

During my last trip as an Explorer Unit Director, it was so cold that the campers and counselors created an indoor venue for closing campfire using tarps. Counselors and campers brought their sleeping bags out to stay warm.

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

Camp helped me with conflict resolution and collaborating as a team. I've found both of these useful professionally dealing with customers and in my family life as a father of three children. I've implemented camp-style evaluation processes in my business and still

use the goal setting that started in camp to pursue my dreams today.

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

Well in regards to "Minikani People", I married one - Calie (Henrickson) Herbst, and I work with one (Eddie Molenda). My family attends family camp every year, and my son started Mini Camp this summer, so we're still frequent visitors to Minikani. I love to see the fantastic job the new leadership is doing in bringing the spirit of Minikani to a new generation. Our family has also been lucky to help guide Mario Hardwick, a MAC campership recipient, through 6+ years at Minikani. He's now an LT, and we couldn't be more proud of him. Although it has been twelve years since my last summer at camp, I feel just as close to Mama Minikani today as I did then.

◆ **What are you doing now?**

While it's certainly different from my time as Wrangler and Explorer Unit Director, I started Erik Herbst Insurance Agency in January of 2007, and we're closing in on our 10th anniversary with American Family Insurance. Our customers include many Minikani alumni, and we truly value the great network that the Minikani Alumni Community provides.

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In addition to serving customer's insurance needs, giving back is a major part of our philosophy as a business. We've proudly sponsored the Minikani Alumni Community since its inception, and many other causes championed by alumni. The great thing about camp people is that there are so many driven people involved in worthy causes, and we're always happy to help. As always if anyone has insurance needs, or an opportunity for charitable giving, please contact me at eherbst@amfam.com.

◆ **How do you think your life would be different without your Minikani experience?**

It's really difficult to answer this question because camp is so ingrained in my life. It's where I learned to set goals, and to believe in my capabilities to achieve them. It's where I became a confident person who believed I could do anything I wanted to do.



The relationships created at Minikani remain some of the strongest I have today, including the love of my life and mother of my children who I married on the shores of Amy Belle. Sharing camp with my children is one of the most powerful and valuable experiences that we have together.



Nature Notes

By Bruce

You probably know that Minikani has two lakes and a swamp, which is located east of Explorer Hill and north of Halquist Lodge. (As you walk down Explorer Hill towards Pine Forest, the swamp is on your right.) Rainwater collects in the swamp, which eventually drains eastward to join the Milwaukee watershed on its way to Lake Michigan. On the other side of camp the water slowly drains to the west, where it follows the Bark River on the way to the Mississippi watershed.

Surrounding Mud Lake, especially on the west and south ends, is an ecological aquatic gem known technically as a **bog**. (If you're like me, you may find all these wetland names - marsh, swamp, quagmire, bog, morass, slough, fen - confusing.) To be a bog, the area must consist of wet spongy ground. Technically a bog is a poorly drained, usually acid area that's rich in accumulated dead plant material. It frequently surrounds a body of open water (Mud Lake), and has characteristic plants (sedges, mosses, and sphagnum). Many years ago Minikani's bog extended south and merged with the waters of Amy Belle Lake.

If you've ever tried to walk along this edge of Mud Lake, you've probably experienced the "bog". The mass of roots from nearby trees and shrubs make it feel like you're walking on a floating mat of vegetation. Find a soft spot in the mat and your foot breaks through it to a few feet of open water – probably much to your surprise.

All of Minikani's amphibians and reptiles like living in or near the bog. Bull frogs and leopard frogs are the most common, but occasionally you can find toads, spring peepers and chorus frogs. Salamanders include the blue-spotted and tiger. Garter snakes slither on top of the bouncy bog hunting the amphibian species for lunch. Snapping turtles seldom leave the lake, except to lay their eggs, as do Minikani's most common turtle, the painted.



The variety of plant species of the bog also range from common to more rare. On the surface of the bog is **sphagnum moss**, also called peat moss, which can hold large quantities of water. Grab a handful of moss and squeeze hard and you'll see its sponge-like quality. This explains why sphagnum is used for gardening, and has been used for centuries as a dressing for wounds. Growing among the moss plants are two of Minikani's more rare plants, the carnivorous pitcher plant and tiny the pink orchid.



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Short grasses and ferns of the edge of the bog give way to taller shrubs like swamp willow, red-stemmed dogwood, and the evil **poison sumac**. The sumac looks like its harmless relative (staghorn sumac) of drier habitats, but its red stems and the fact that your feet are probably getting soaked standing close to the poison plant may help with identification.



Like poison ivy, the poison sumac contains the toxin *urushiol*, and any contact with this chemical can produce a painful rash. Be careful - people can become allergic to urushiol over time, so do not assume you are safe if you fail to develop a rash the first time you are exposed to it.

Still farther back from the edge of the lake the bog transitions into a wooded area. Silver maple, swamp oak, and **tamarack** trees become common. Though the tamarack tree resembles other evergreens, it is actually a deciduous conifer, meaning that it sheds its needles every fall. The pale green needles are soft and short (about an inch long) and grow in brush-like tufts on small knobby spurs along each twig.



Just before the needles drop in autumn, the needles turn a beautiful golden color, affording the stands of tamarack a striking contrast to the fall foliage of the lake. Local Native American names for the tamarack include ‘swamp tree’ and ‘wood used for snowshoes’, which easily describes its habitat and uses. The wetland between the Indian Unit and Amy Belle Lake used to be full of tamarack trees, so the wooden path to the Waterfront Cabins 18 & 19 was aptly named the “Tamarack Trail”. (The Tamarack Trail sign below that was created by Stew Brown is no longer there. It has been replaced with another sign “To Turtle Bay”.)



Missing Members

As the Minikani Alumni Community begins its 8th year, it is time to take a look at how much we have grown and look ahead to our future. It’s easy to see that our membership has not reached its full potential - yet. Since anyone who has ever worked at Minikani is considered a member of our community, there must be thousands of people out there who don’t even know that we exist. The problem is that we don’t know who is missing from our list, but you do!

It would be great if we could double our number of members. So here’s the deal. We are asking every member of the MAC to ‘recruit’ one more member. As you look at the “Staff Lists” section of our website, can you find a name of a person you know who has not completed their profile? Then they are probably not receiving any information about the MAC. Send them an email, call, text, or write them and point them toward our website and the simple registration link on the home page. Remember: membership in the MAC is always free!

So what do you say – can you help us grow? Give other staff members who may not have heard about us a chance to join our group. And just think – if every person just brought one person from their time at Minikani into our community, our numbers would double. Thanks in advance for giving this matter some thought.

