



Summer 2018  
Volume 10, Issue 3

# NEWSLETTER

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Thanks To: Kendall Dowsett,  
Sharon Cross, Amelia Stastney,  
Michael Luckey

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Minikani 2018 Summer Staff. There they are in the picture above. I can count 116 smiling (?) faces of LT III's, Counselors and Ad Staff. Who knows – some might not have been able to be there for the photo. And I'm not sure it includes all the Office Staff, Kitchen Staff, or Maintenance Staff. 116 total.

Back at home I've got a collage of camp photos on my wall (a gift) that has a picture of the 1972 Summer Staff. It shows all 38 staff members, including the nurse who is in full white uniform, but doesn't include Ethel the camp cook, who was probably busy when the picture was taken... cooking.

Things at Minikani were sure a lot different in the early 70's. For example, the Dining Hall was in

Fireside Lodge, along with the kitchen and camp store. There were 21 round tables, one for each cabin and a staff table. There was no swimming pool or showers. No LT program, no bear claws, no Adventure Challenge skills. Only boys stayed on Explorer Hill. Camp had no Mini-Kamp or Day Camp. Counselors didn't fill out ICP's or Camper Reports. The only phone for staff to use was a single pay phone in the Staff Lodge.

Things have changed in the last almost 50 years, but a lot of things are the same. Kids still come to Minikani for a week or two of fun, outdoor activities, new skills, friends, and experiences. Let's hope the campers and all 116 staff of 2018 have the best summer of their lives.



# Staff Training

June, 2018

Alumni were invited to Minikani on Wednesday, June 13th for the first ever (?) Alumni Campfire at Staff Training. The invitation included dinner, some time to mingle, and then entertainment by some iconic performers at Council Bluff.

Here's what Kendall Dowsett shared about the event: "We had Jason Horowitz sing a song he wrote called "Old Friends," John Bolger told a story (scary/funny) about the quarry, Greg Valde, Michael Luckey, Dane Mantia and I sang songs and then recent alumni Gordy Goetz and Max Leonhardt sang a song with a current staff member Nick Urban.

It was awesome for me to meet the fresh faces of Minikani's summer staff and getting to visit with a couple of my remaining LTs who are now Girls Unit Director (Grace Barlow), Explorer Unit Director (Erika Ballentine), and Assistant Summer Program Director (Rachel Kornetsky). It was so wild seeing it all come full circle, and seeing these awesome ladies I remember as LTs now running camp (quite literally!!)."



Why is Tom Smiling ???



Find out on the next page...



**Message from Jon McLaren:**

All alumni are invited to a social at Cabin 20 on Sundays after drop off at 2:30pm. Alumni are also invited to the closing campfires. Can't make these events? Call me and come tour and have dinner with us.

Any. Day. You. Want.  
414-639-4291.



# CAMP NEWS



## New at Minikani

### Welcome Sign

The new welcome sign is finally complete. Made possible with many donations, it is certainly a proper entrance for the next era. The sign has its La Lune “Camp Minikani” lettering, thanks to the talented Karl Herschede.

### Tom’s Treehouse

Thanks to many generous people, Tom’s Treehouse now stands on Explorer Hill. It is large enough to sleep a whole cabin. When fully complete, it will be a fully intentional space. Designers want the space to be used in a way that strengthens Tom’s legacy of building relationships and bonds between people. There will be signs that pose questions that counselors can use with their kids to have fun conversations that bring people together. 

## White Ragers

Three staff members are included in the challenge of the White Rag to be held on Sunday, August 5<sup>th</sup>.

### Congratulations to the newest White Ragers:

- Erika Ballentine
- Amanda Brown
- Allison Mitchell



## Camp Schedule

A DAY AT CAMP MINIKANI	
7:15	Wake Up and Cabin Cleanup
7:55	Assembly and Flag Raising
8:05	Breakfast
8:40	Password
9:15	First Skill Activity
10:15	Second Skill Activity
11:15	Third Skill Activity
12:20	Assembly
12:30	Lunch
1:20	Rest Period
2:30	Cabin Activities
5:20	Assembly
5:30	Dinner
6:10	Free time
7:20	Assembly and Flag Lowering
7:30	Evening Activities
9:00	Call to Quarters – In Cabin
9:15	Lights out and Vespers



## Cleaned???

What do you think “Cleaned” means to the MAC? A) Received Maid Service, B) “Taken Out” Gangster Style, C) Spiritually Purified, or D) Dropped from MailChimp emails? The answer, of course, is “D”. (Hopefully no alumni have met their demise through “B”.)

Unfortunately, we’ve had 50 alumni join the MAC at one time, but we can no longer keep in touch with them through our emails. Being “Cleaned” is a lot different than unsubscribing. Alumni who have been “Cleaned” are people who have changed their email addresses over the years and never let us know their new address, so they can’t keep up with what’s happening.

We need your help. Please look through the list of names (and LT One year) and see if you know any of the people. Then contact them through text, email, Facebook, skype, phone, etc. and ask them to email us their new address at [minikanistafflodge@gmail.com](mailto:minikanistafflodge@gmail.com). It’s just that easy. (While you’re at it, you might reminisce a little about the good ‘ole days.) Remember, membership in the MAC is always free, and never expires – unless we lose touch through email addresses.

Hopefully we can get everyone back on board with our alumni community in time for the big 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration next year. Thanks for your help.

- Ralph Yerex 1975
- Steve Hasbrook 1978
- John Quale 1979
- Jenny Vogt 1980
- Ashley Hepburn 1984

- John Huber 1984
- Eileen Walsh 1984
- Chuck Huber 1987
- Neil Willenson 1987
- Steve Huber 1989
- Pete Kindem 1991
- Ted Peetz 1992
- Erin Ambardekar (Whitcomb) 1993
- Molly Thompson 1994
- Nick Klezek 1997
- Justin Cummings 1998
- Whitney Draughon 1998
- Lea Mejdahl (Petersen) 1999
- Amanda Schwiesow 1999
- Andrew Hansen 2001
- Jane Hardwick 2001
- Mary Kate Steinmiller 2001
- Christine Tighe 2002
- Laura Miller 2003
- Riley Jenich 2003
- Nikki Trau 2005
- Molly Springer 2006
- Lisa Peters 2006
- Sean Hickey 2007
- Catherine Schumacher 2007
- Ethan Taxman 2007
- Claire Aasen 2007
- Evan Loeffler 2008
- Annie Makenzie 2008
- Alex Nitschke 2008
- Joe Norton 2008
- Macz Norton 2008
- Lauren Roskos 2008
- Jane Wierdsma 2008
- Sam Henderson 2008
- Megan Cole 2008
- Aaron Fiss 2008
- Katie McGuire 2008
- John Michael 2008
- Tyler Karian 2008
- Kasey Gusho 2008
- Ian Harding 2008
- Amanda Blasius
- Stephen Filmanowicz
- John Wood



From the Blue Rag Ceremony

**“I would be friend to all the foe, the friendless.”**

“Blessed are they who have the gift of making friends, for it is one of God’s best gifts. It involves many things; but above all, the power of going out of one’s self and appreciating whatever is noble and loving in another.”  
(Thomas Hughes)

**Keeping in Touch with the MAC**

**Email**  
[minikanistafflodge@gmail.com](mailto:minikanistafflodge@gmail.com)

**Website**  
[www.minikanistafflodge.com](http://www.minikanistafflodge.com)

**Facebook**  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/28911858611>

**From YMCA Camp Minikani:**

Please stayed tuned for Camp’s 100th Anniversary Bash in summer 2019. At the celebration we will honor Minikani’s past and galvanize its future. In the meantime, numerous facility projects are being considered in the spirit of strengthening Minikani for 100 more years. Contact Jon McLaren for more information.  
[jmclaren@ymcamke.org](mailto:jmclaren@ymcamke.org).

# SpotLight

On Alumni

By Sharon Cross

Although it was a few years ago, Sharon thinks she was 8 when she first came to camp with her twin brother. Her first counselor was Mary O'Malley. She returned to camp every summer because she "loved how camp made her feel."

◆ **What did you do at camp?**

I was at camp as a GU counselor for two years, then an explorer/Gun and Run Director, then OLT director for two years (my first year with David Ruiz who taught me so much and my second year with Dane Mantia.) Then I was Trips Director and my last year (2015?) I was Leadership and Trips Director.

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

One of my favorite spots at camp is Indian hill. I loved camping there with my cabins and being close to Mud Lake.

◆ **Do you have any special memories from camp?**

Oh, so many, but the first thing that pops into my head is one from my Explorer Years. It was raining and our cabin was charged with coming up with the group activity and we landed on doing a "Throw Sticks as Far as You Can with Your Left Hand Game". It was wild to me that such a silly and stupid game could become so fun and something that all the other campers got into even in the rain.

Another memory was my first year as an OLT Director and we were crossing the road to hike up to Section 13 on the Superior Hiking Trail. We turned around and saw a Mama and **FOUR** bear cubs. It was surreal and beautiful.



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

One major skill that camp taught me is how to accept and provide feedback. I am constantly asking how I can do better and always looking to see how I can more effectively give co-workers or teammates feedback.

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

After 15 or so years, leaving camp was difficult but it felt right to let other staff step into leadership roles. I also wanted to focus on Ultimate Frisbee and the competitive club season is held in the summer. Camp set me on my path of working with youth. Without camp, I don't think that I would be working in non-profits.

◆ **I understand you work with a non-profit called "Running Rebels" in Milwaukee. Can you share a little about what this group is and what you do?**

Running Rebels Community Organization is a 39 year old grassroots mentoring organization in Milwaukee for 12-19 year old African American youth. We do

mentoring in a variety of capacities including preventative mentoring through after-school/ summer programming, and our Violence Free Zone (where we place teams of 5 staff in 7 MPS schools to do mentoring and mediations). We also do intervention work for youth who are involved in the Juvenile Justice System. We pair Running Rebels Mentors with youth who are currently in detention and youth who are back in the community. Our mentors build strong relationships with these youth by accompanying them to court dates, connecting with their families and engaging youth in programming.



◆ **What do you do there?**

My role at the rebels is to develop programming, coordinate volunteers, and assist with development and event planning. Please feel free to reach out to me at [sharon.cross@runningrebels.org](mailto:sharon.cross@runningrebels.org) if you are interested in volunteering or hearing more! Also check out our website at <https://runningrebels.org>

◆ **If you could go back to camp, anything you'd do different?**

I think I would want to focus more on creating quality moments with my campers instead of worrying about planning the most creative cabin activities.



Learners need endless FEEDBACK more than they need endless teaching. (Grant Wiggins)

# Highlight: H<sub>2</sub>O Front

Editor’s Note: This summer we chose to highlight the **Waterfront Skills**. We plan to highlight a different skill in future summer editions of the Newsletter.

The Minikani Waterfront is alive and well, very much like you probably remember it. What better place to be on a hot summer’s day, enjoying the pool and Amy Belle to the fullest. The Waterfront has a massive staff (largest on camp) that is made up of around 35 counselors and 2 full time lifeguards.



This summer’s Waterfront Director, Amelia Stastney, recently shared with me how things are going. “So far the Waterfront has run very smoothly.” Morning Skills include Pool swimming, Boating, Canoeing, Paddle boarding, Wind Surfing, and Kayaking. There’s also Sailing, described as the “COOLEST skill at camp, only 6 kids per hour but they learn such amazing skills and get to move extremely fast.” There’s also Tech Diving, where kids can jump off a 6 foot tower or a diving board in the middle of the lake.



An ever-popular skill is Skin Diving. Amelia says “Kids can dive (with mask and fins) to look at the bottom of the lake. There is so much cool stuff to find! A real poker table with Michael Luckey’s playing cards laminated on the table, a ramblin’ X treasure chest, a sunken sail boat and even a milk truck (this one is fake, but the kids believe it). Once a year we do a skill called ‘Minikani Museums’ where we dive down and pull out all the old pieces of metal from the lake and we have found an old stethoscope and an oil lantern (both antiques from 1890-1910.)”

Amelia finds being the H<sub>2</sub>O Director especially rewarding. “There is no better sight then looking over a full waterfront - kids diving off the tower, jumping on the trampolines, sailing the sailboats and paddling on the paddleboards. One trampoline has a log attached to it and the kids have a blast trying to run to the end of the log before falling in the water.”



She says that much about the front is the same as it has always been – right down to using the same equipment forever, causing her to spend a lot of time making maintenance repairs. Amelia admits “Minikani is in DIRE need of sailboats. We used to have 6-8 sailboats (less than 5 years ago), but we now only have two.”



As for waterfront traditions, kids still try to find a red rock in the red rock area (about one is found every year, but this has gotten more frustrating after a BU prank that involved spray painting hundreds of rocks red and throwing them into the red rock area). Belunda, the Amy Bell lake whale, now goes by the name Belda.

Early morning Minute Man has been run once so far this year. If the kids can make it to the pool without being seen by a counselor or the WF Director, the doors to the pool are opened for exactly one minute between 6:46-6:47 and the kids can swim every morning until they are caught. Amelia confesses “I know most WFDs hate it, but I loved it.”



Kellie Hasbrook & Jane Hudson

What is the **2018 Waterfront**? The same lake and pool, mostly the same skills and traditions, same Buddy Tags made out of metal washers, and much of the same equipment. But it all adds up to once-in-a-lifetime memory for thousands of campers who will remember their waterfront activities for a long, long time.

I know I do.



# Nature Notes

By Bruce

## “Swallows at Minikani”

If you’ve spent any time at Minikani, I bet you’ve seen a swallow. You may notice their forked tails and sharply pointed wings as they dart through the sky busily catching insects to eat. One of the best places to see a swallow is when you’re walking across Norris Field - at just about any time of the day. I used to love to stand in the middle of the field, find a swallow flying in circles catching bugs, and follow it by turning my body (not just my eyes) so it always faced the bird. Although they’re not the fastest flyers, their speeds of up to 20 MPH and circular flight can make a person feel dizzy pretty fast. Ah, great memories of camp.

Swallows belong to the family *Hirundinidae*, a group of perching birds characterized by their adaptation to aerial feeding. Since they eat insects, they do most of their breeding in North America during the Summer when insects are plentiful and then migrate to South America during our Winter.

### 2018 Year of the Bird

This year marks the centennial of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, a powerful and important federal law that makes it illegal to pursue, hunt, take, capture, kill or sell live or dead birds, feathers, eggs and nests, except as allowed by permit or regulated hunting. Passed just after the Passenger Pigeon became extinct, this law protects more than 1,100 bird species. Over the last century it has saved millions if not billions of birds.

*Barn Swallow:*



There are actually 3 kinds of swallows at Minikani. **Barn Swallows** usually make their nests out of mud and locate them in the rafters of barns, walls, roofs, or bridges. Working mostly in the morning, it takes both parents about 1,000 trips to gather the necessary mud and nesting materials. All of Minikani’s Corrals have had a plentiful supply of these mud nests. Many times there’d be a family of baby birds in the nest that pop their beaks open when the parents return with their bug-lunch.

*Tree Swallow:*



**Tree Swallows** make their nests in different types of cavities. While they can’t make their own cavities, they rely on pre-made cavities found in trees, old wood pecker holes, and bird houses. Most other kinds of swallows are colonial, sharing their habitat with lots of other birds. (There’s always plenty of flies for

everyone to eat around a barn.) But tree swallows prefer to be the only birds in an area, laying claim to all the bugs in that area. While they don’t care much for other birds around them, tree swallows don’t seem to mind human neighbors at all. In my day one of the old totem poles at Council Bluff had rotted inside enough to provide a nice nesting cavity. Tree swallows living in the totem pole never seemed to mind the hundreds of people coming and going around the area.

*Barn Swallow with hungry babies:*



**Bank Swallows** are smaller than the other swallows. As their name suggests, they prefer to nest in colonies in tunnels in vertical banks of dirt or sand, usually along rivers or ponds, seldom far away from water. Years ago when the sea wall was built along Amy Belle they put in 5 inch pipes to help the water drain through the dirt into the lake. Bank swallows from the surrounding sand and gravel pits must have been delighted to see such perfect nesting sites. Today you can still see swallows flying low over the lake with quick, fluttery wingbeats in search of insects.

