



# NEWSLETTER



Summer 2021  
Volume 13, Issue 3

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Thanks To: Eli Fyksen, Emily Tremel Schieve, Hillary Phelps Lobenstein, Kendall Dowsett and David Van Sicklen

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Let's take a time machine and set it for Staff Training years ago when you were a 2<sup>nd</sup> year counselor. It's a rainy afternoon session and you've just been split up into small 'teams' of various ages and experience.

Here's your task: Pretend that a pandemic has shut down camp for the past year. You and your team need to plan for the upcoming summer's entry back into overnight camping, while keeping in mind the health and safety of everyone. And you'll have to keep the parents happy too. Oh yeah, and don't forget to also keep the spirit and magic of Minikani ever present for campers and staff.

It's a tall order, but it's been done. Everyone at Minikani has worked long and tirelessly\* this past year to put Summer 2021 together.

Specific protocols have been designed and are in place for arriving at camp, distancing, meals, skills, Explorers, LTs, Day Camp and more. (You can read about some of them on the next page.)

As alumni, we can be very proud of the work they have done to prepare for camp this summer and are now putting into action.



*\* Is there any other way to work at Minikani???*

# Minikani 2021



Yes, Minikani is ‘open’ for overnight camp this summer. But it is somewhat different than any of us remember. Minikani staff have developed and are following a “Playbook”, a collection of best practices provided by the CDC, the American Camping Association, the Association of Camp Nurses, local health agencies, the YMCA of Milwaukee, the Minikani advisory board and others. The goal is to limit the spread of COVID if it does enter camp. Everyone is fully committed to providing a safe, impactful, and magical experience for everyone, just as always. ([Click here for your own .pdf copy of the “Playbook”.](#))

When campers arrive they will have a PCR test as a layer of safety. This non-invasive nasal test will be repeated every week. Masks and Physical Distancing will be used whenever campers are around others outside their cabin group. Hand washing and/or sanitizing will be practiced often.



Cabin group live, eat, wash, and do activities together as a small group of 6-8 campers with 1-2 staff members when possible. Masks don’t need to be worn when the group is outside, so outside activities are encouraged. In addition, 3 cabin groups make a “cohort”. These 3 groups, as a cohort, can do outside activities together without masks. Campers wear colored wristbands to ensure that kids know who is in their group. Masks are not required when inside their own cabin, are more than 6 feet from other cabins, when seated and eating, cleaning up in the KYBO, and during waterfront activities.



A large tent has been set up on the tennis courts so that everyone can eat meals together. Tables are spaced apart and meals are served in the traditional family style. Singing after meals helps make everyone feel like they’re at camp.

Physical Distancing also makes it possible to use Council Bluff for activities and campfires. Explorer trips, the LT program and day camps are all happening with their own special protocols.

At this time about 95% of the staff are fully vaccinated and 100% of the counselors are. Camp has additional testing materials on site so if a camper or staff is showing signs/symptoms of COVID 19 they can get tested right away.

“For over 100 years of Camp magic, the health and safety of campers and staff has been of utmost importance. While we are eager that hope is on the horizon, with vaccines and testing more accessible, we are actively preparing for adjustments to run Camp safely in a world where COVID-19 is still prevalent.”

**Minikani COVID-19 PLAYBOOK**

Regardless of their vaccination status, all staff will be expected to follow all COVID-19 guidelines including mask wearing (indoors and with those outside of their cabin group), testing and physical distancing where possible.



Different? Yes, definitely. Safe as possible? Absolutely. A great experience for everyone? Let’s hope so. Kudos to all the staff and everyone at Minikani who has worked so hard to make it possible to have a “COVID-normal” camp experience for kids this summer.





# MAC Co-Directors

**Kendall Dowsett  
David Van Sicklen**

Kendall Dowsett and David Van Sicklen were both LT I's the summer of 2003. Almost twenty years later they find themselves as Co-Directors of the Minikani Alumni Community. I caught up with the busy two recently to find out a little more about each them.

David started going to camp when he was in 3rd grade in 1997 and ended his camp tenure as the Waterfront Director in 2009. Teaching Skin Diving was his favorite skill of all time. Kendall didn't go to camp for the first time until she was 12. She truly thought that her house would burn down if she left her family home alone without her. Fortunately, the house did not burn down, and she went to camp for many years afterward. She was Crafts Director, Explorer Director, and an LT Director during her years on Ad Staff.



I asked them if they had a favorite memory or experience from their time at camp and they both agreed that their favorite years at camp were as Explorer Counselors. They loved going up north with amazing campers and counselors, camping, hiking and canoeing. They

still love a pita sandwich with cream cheese, summer sausage and cucumbers and especially love washing it down with an ice cold Happy Place when they can.



**Who is this Mystery Baby?**

One of their favorite memories (and lasting endeavors) from being a counselors in the EU was their work in perfecting the "Ultimate Chest Bump." This epic move requires partner one (typically Kendall) to lay on his or her back, knees bent, hands extended upward. Partner two (typically David) then grasps partner one's hands, and on the count of three partner one jumps up as partner two pulls partner one upwards towards them with as much force as both parties can muster. At peak momentum, chests meet and ideally both partners ricochet backwards and topple into a nearby area of tall grass (and probably poison ivy☹).

I also asked them both why they chose to be a Co-Director on the MAC Board. They replied: "We love staying connected to alumni and helping continue to kindle the spark that made us all fall in love

with our summer homeland while also raising funds to help send kids to camp that might not be able to go without our support. We love planning and attending events where we can catch up with old friends and meet older or younger alumni and hear their amazing stories. It's great giving back to our camp that gave us SO much!"

What's it like being on the MAC Board? "It's great!" they say. Everyone meets online once every two months and we talk about ways to support the MAC's mission, which goes like this: *"Through acts of fellowship and service, the Minikani Alumni Community strives to honor our past experiences, support current summer programming and preserve Minikani traditions for the future."* Our board is composed of alumni from different generations of camp and varying personal backgrounds which makes us very well-rounded.

Any final thoughts? "The MAC is always looking for fresh ideas and people to join our work! Don't hesitate to reach out to us if you're interested in supporting the work or have some ideas to help strengthen our community and mission!" [minikanistafflodge@gmail.com](mailto:minikanistafflodge@gmail.com)



**David, Kendall & Colin Harari**



# Cabin 7858

By Hillary Phelps Lobenstein

I thrive on chaos and fun; those emotions from my days as a counselor at Minikani still live on in me. I long to hear the laughter of a group of campers playing Capture the Flag in Pine Forest. I want to watch as campers run rampantly through Norris Field to elude their counselors in the Runt Hunt. I crave the close knit community of a cabin during vesper. Even though I am now 45 years old, I still long to return to those distant days of Minikani.

I have found a way to return to some of those moments--even though it is out of camp. When my daughter was in kindergarten, she told me that she wanted to join Girl Scouts because she “wanted to deliver the cookies.” In the fall of 2015, I became a Girl Scout Daisy leader for Troop 7858. We started with seventeen kindergarteners; they were an energized group and only had an attention span of 43 seconds. Now, these same girls will be entering sixth grade this fall. I like to think of Troop 7858 as my current group of campers; I am fortunate to see their growth and maturity over a long period of time.

I interviewed my daughter, Audra, for this article. She has seen my parenting, leading, and counseling skills up close. My daughter’s favorite activities of Girl Scouts include going camping at a variety of Wisconsin State Parks (Peninsula, Newport, and Devil’s Lake), going on adventures with her friends, and building social skills and independence. I also asked Audra what things she learned that

transferred between Girl Scouts and Camp Minikani; she was a first year camper this year--Session 1A in Cabin 6. She said she learned about the three types of firewood, horseback riding, and how to be a good person and a good friend.

Here’s what I have learned from my time as a Girl Scout leader. First, it is critical to build your community. Of course, the rapport between leader and Girl Scout is critical, but the relationship built between the leaders and other parents is pivotal to creating a high functioning group. As moms, we consult one another regarding questions of parenting, difficult situations, and our girls growing up. We laugh and cry through all of the tumult of parenting.

Next, I have tried activities outside of my comfort zone. I want the girls to see their adults be challenged by a new activity. I want the girls to witness their moms try something new and not be particularly good at it. As an adult, I have a tendency to stick with what I know. But it is critical that I try new activities with varying degrees of success, so my daughter sees that I am still challenging myself.



Daisy Girl Scouts



Brownie Girl Scouts



Cadette Girl Scouts

Finally, expect change. Those seventeen original Daisy Girl Scouts have transformed to a group of nine Cadette Girl Scouts for the 2021-2022 school year. Their propensity to wear pink has waned, and now, they prefer turquoise. They are able to make decisions and come up with their own ideas for what they want to accomplish in Girl Scouts.

I can’t wait to see how much more Cabin 7858 continues to grow into their teen and adult years.

I am so fortunate to be able to use the skills that I acquired at Minikani as a Girl Scout leader.



Horseback at Minikani





# SpotLight On Alumni

## Emily Tremel Schieve

### ◆ What is your history at camp?

I started attending Minikani as a camper when I was 10 years old. I attended with some neighborhood kids that had told my family about camp. I was a first year Counselor at Minikani in the summer of 2006. I was on staff for four summers. I was in the girls unit two summers, explorer counselor for one summer and LT director my last summer.

I was on the Waterfront during all my years as a counselor and I loved being in the Pool. Water Ballet was a favorite skill along with teaching No Band Swimming! So many great memories on the waterfront.

### ◆ Do you have a favorite place at Minikani?

There are so many places at Camp that bring back such wonderful memories. I think one of my favorite places is lining up at the flagpole for breakfast! The excitement of another day, the sun shining and everyone gathered together really brings back fond memories of summers shared with such wonderful people.

### ◆ A favorite meal?

I loved coming to the dining hall after a morning of swimming in the lake or pool and having those classic chicken patties for lunch!



### ◆ Did you have a favorite “job”?

My favorite job at Minikani was being a first year counselor. I loved being part of the Girls Unit and forming lifelong friendships with other counselors. I think that summer I really grew into myself and gained a lot of confidence.

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

I would have to go with Opening day, even though it was filled with countless stops, and not all the "fun" that we think of when we think of Camp, it was a time to meet new campers, friends and develop routine. Often coming in tired after a day off but easily rejuvenated when meeting a new batch of campers. Making sure to plan your day around getting your favorite campsite when the sign-up sheet was posted, and rushing to your favorite sign ups after dinner.

### ◆ Any special skills you learned?

I learned so much at camp that helps me today. I think that learning to give and receive feedback was a great skill that I carry into my current job today as a Special Education Teacher. I do not feel there are many places like camp where you learn how to receive feedback so gracefully. I also learned that those giving the feedback are doing so because they just want you to become better.

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

Camp to the real world transition is never fun, but after college I started teaching in the Milwaukee Area. I initially worked with students with significant disabilities and brought many camp songs into the classroom in my early years of teaching.



Emily with a Future 2029 Camper

### ◆ How does camp help you be a better Special Ed Teacher?

Obviously, in a career where I work with kids daily, camp was a great experience. I think the biggest things camp taught me was how to set boundaries, give options and work with kids to create goals. I also think that camp provided me an opportunity to communicate with parents. This helped me early on to have more confidence when speaking with parents about their child’s education and social goals.

### ◆ What song always makes you think of camp?

Waterfront sendoff songs always bring me back to that specific moment. Peaches, Baba O' Riley (Teenage Wasteland) are two that bring me right back to running out of the annex on a hot summer day and jumping into Amy Belle.

### ◆ Anything else to share?

I am so thankful for the friends and memories I made at Minikani. I would not be where I am today without the people at Minikani helping me along the way.



# Nature Notes

By Bruce

## Foxes and Coyotes

My very first summer at Minikani (1970) we had a nurse, Helen, who was the camp director's aunt. She and her husband, George, lived in the Infirmary. One night at dinner she asked me if I'd seen the baby foxes yet. "What?" I must have said. "No. Where are they?" She offered to show them to me after flag lowering. She had a pair of binoculars and we went out towards the farmer's cornfield on the eastern edge of camp. There they were, two little kits running around while their mother kept an eye on them. But that was the only time I ever saw foxes at camp. In my 22 years at camp I never saw a coyote.



Foxes, coyotes, raccoons, skunks and certain rodents are known as *synanthropic* species. They have learned how to take advantage of human-created habitats. They thrive in a mosaic of suburbs and cities next to woodlots and fields, which provides some distance from humans, but also gives them certain benefits as well.

That may explain why scientists have been seeing an influx of both foxes and coyotes in cities and



suburban areas. Your chances of seeing them are improving, although it might just be a quick glance as they run across a road or dart into a wooded area or field.

Wisconsin's red fox is about 3 feet in length, slinky and skinny-legged, weighing only 9 to 12 pounds full grown. But they look a lot bigger because of their thick fur. They have reddish black or silver fur and a bushy tail that most of the time has a white tip.

Foxes are great hunters, and not only because they're fast. When hunting, they will slowly approach their prey, creeping low to the ground and stretching their head high to spot the prey. Then, BAM! They pounce on the mouse, rabbit, or other prey with their front feet. Mice, especially meadow voles, are a popular food for red foxes, but their favorite dish is cottontail rabbit. They will also eat berries and insects, along with squirrels, ducks and songbirds.

Foxes are usually solitary nocturnal mammals and don't live in dens most of the year. They will set up a nursery in abandoned woodchuck burrows when it's time to have babies. They mate in mid-January and have 5 or 6 pups in mid-March. You've probably read stories about the cunning fox trying to outwit his animal brothers and sisters. Foxes no doubt got their crafty reputation from the way they look, with their long thin faces and

yellow eyes that have narrow slits for pupils. But in real life, foxes are more concerned with finding food than with playing tricks on anyone.

The coyote is much larger, about the size of a medium-sized dog weighing 20 to 30 pounds. Look for its long, thin legs, a tapered muzzle, yellow-colored eyes like foxes, and rather large, pointed ears. It also has a bushy, black-tipped drooping tail.

Coyotes are so successful because they're not very picky about what they eat. They are both predators and scavengers. In other words, they'll hunt for food - rodents, rabbits, birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians, insects, fruits, berries, and even corn. But they will also feed on already dead animals, which in Wisconsin is mainly roadkill deer. They hunt in packs which are actually family groups, including a breeding male and female, young from both the current year and the previous year.



As for the idea that either animal is living off your pets - cats and dogs - or your garbage - is very unlikely. They are able to live in a habitat close to people, yet they seldom interact with us. Scientists have studied the scats (feces) of both foxes and coyotes and have found that very little of what they eat comes from humans - either in the form of small pets or garbage from our trash.



## Fun Fox and Coyote Facts

◆ Gray foxes are the only canines that have retractable claws that allow them to climb and descend trees quickly.

◆ The arctic fox can handle cold better than most animals on earth. It doesn't even begin to shiver until it reaches -94°F.



◆ What does the fox say? A lot, actually. Foxes make 40 different sounds, some of which you can [listen to here](#).

◆ Coyotes can stand and walk on their toes just as people do. And like people, they do it to move softly and quietly to avoid drawing attention to themselves.

◆ In 2011, researchers opened a grave in a 16,500-year-old cemetery in Jordan to find the remains of a man and his pet fox. This was 4,000 years before the first-known human and domestic dog were buried together.

◆ There are 19 subspecies of coyotes which are distinguished by their genetic differences and also by where they live.

◆ A race between a coyote and a roadrunner? Put your money on the coyote (40 mph) over the roadrunner (20 mph). But don't feel sorry for the roadrunner – they are birds and they can fly!

## Camp Is Essential

(Editor's Note: The following is adapted from an ACA Parent's Blog by Mark Orens. To read the complete Blog, click [HERE](#).)

Unfortunately, over the past year the connections that our kids have been able to derive from things like school, religious organizations, and sports teams has been greatly diminished, if not altogether eliminated. This has left a significant gap in an area that is fundamental to our kids' sense of social-emotional health and overall wellbeing.



Don't get me wrong. Schools, religious organizations, and sports teams do a great job of building a sense of community and connection for our kids. But it is a secondary goal. Their primary goals are learning, spirituality, and skill-building. That's what makes camps so important now. When you're a camper, a sense of community and connection is the primary goal.

**Camp is even more essential than ever.**

Camp teaches . . . and so well in fact that the kids have no idea they are learning. Camp is a kid-tested and parent-approved classroom with a curriculum that delivers daily lessons in resilience, diversity, problem-solving, collaboration, communication (the kind that doesn't happen through a device),



flexible thinking, and so much more. We build an inclusive community where kids can be confident that they belong, that they will be respected, and that they are among friends.

Camp has the unique ability to engender a sense of *community* among those who are lucky enough to take part in the traditional camp experience. The kind of community that is not defined solely by proximity with one another, but rather by genuine *connection*, shared interests and experiences, a common sense of purpose, and respect among its members.

**“Camp teaches . . . and so well in fact that the kids have no idea they are learning.”**

We encourage campers to stretch themselves outside of their comfort zones (trying new things, meeting new people), be comfortable making mistakes, persevere when things don't go their way, and celebrate the success of others. Through the camp experience, kids learn that things don't always go your way, failures are a normal part of life and learning, being resilient leads to success, and it is smart to ask for help from others.

**Camp is even more essential than ever.**





# Minikani Songbook

By Bruce

I remember eating and singing in “Fireside Lodge” – only then it was called the “Dining Hall”. We were a smaller camp then, both in acres and number of campers and staff. But after meals we’d sing a couple of songs and I’m sure everyone on Amy Belle could hear us. In ’73 we moved to the “New Dining Hall” and when we sang most of Hubertus could hear us. And I’m positive that Farmer Tyson could hear us when we sang at campfires.

Why do we sing at camp? Experts say singing is a great way to build enthusiasm and get the whole group ready for whatever comes next. What kinds of songs do we sing? Historians say the songs started out as Folk songs, which were composed around campfires even before there were camps.

Most of the songs we sing at camp are fun and upbeat. And loud. And easy to sing and remember. We sing folk songs, spirituals, patriotic songs, religious songs, fun, nonsense, novelty, action songs, repeat, melodious rounds, and cheers.

Does Obadiah really have a head like a ping pong ball? Did a blue jay really die of the whooping cough? Did Mrs. Leary’s cow really

start a fire? Do your ears really hang low? Who knows? Singing at Minikani is fun and almost everyone loves it.

There’s just one problem. After we leave camp and aren’t singing the songs regularly, we tend to forget parts of songs or even whole songs. It seems to happen to almost everyone. Many alumni realize this when they want to share songs with their own children. How does “Little Rabbit Foo Foo” go again?

Here comes the Minikani Alumni Community to your rescue. With help from others, Brett Hayden and Jeremy Welland have collected songs together into booklets, one in 1999 and the other in 2010. I’m presently working with them to put together an

updated collection of all the Minikani songs. Our plan is to make it available to everyone through the MAC’s website as a .pdf document. It will be easy to access online and we’ll be able to just as easily update it as the song collection grows.

We plan to send an email to every one of our MAC

members (473 and counting) when the song book is complete. We’ll also announce it through the MAC Facebook group and on our website. With it you might even be able to remember all the words to Minikani’s “Now I’m a Rambler...” song. Here’s how it starts: “Among the woodlands and the rollin’ hillsides....”



## Minikani Alumni,

Do you have a favorite camp memory? (Actually, who doesn’t?) Maybe a better question would be, “Do you have a favorite camp memory that you could share with other Alumni?” If you can answer “Yes” to that question, then the Newsletter wants to hear from you.

Other questions you may be able to answer “Yes” to: “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?” and “Anyone you know from camp who isn’t a member yet – or who doesn’t receive the Newsletter?”

You get the idea. This is your Newsletter – feel free to make a contribution. Send your email to [minikanistafflodge@gmail.com](mailto:minikanistafflodge@gmail.com).

Thank you!

