



Summer 2023
Volume 15, Issue 3

NEWSLETTER

Inside this Issue

- 1 Busy Year So Far
- 2 Camp News
2023 White Raggers
- 3 New Little Library
MAC's Bedding Project
- 4 MAC at Staff Training
- 5 Skill Highlight:
Gun 'N Run
- 6 Songbook Trivia
Successful Giving
- 7 Ad Staff Wish List
- 8 Spotlight on Staff:
Erika Ballentine
- 10 Nature Notes
Dragonflies

Thanks To: Alex Hushek,
Chloe Proebsting, Ally Chung,
Hillary Lobenstein, Kendall
Dowsett, Erika Ballentine

Bruce Rasmussen, Editor
BruceRass@gmail.com



2023 has been a really busy year for the MAC and Camp Minikani.

The MAC started the year by giving over \$2,070 raised from their Holiday Party to Minikani for Camperships. In March almost 100 alumni joined together to celebrate “Minikani Around the World” – but not all in one place!

36 generous alumni donated \$4,062 during “May Giving Month” that allows us to give even more back to support Minikani in three separate ways. 15 alumni came to camp for a Staff Training event that included social time and a dinner.

Minikani has been even busier, as you can imagine. A brand new Kybo was built and has opened on Explorer Hill. A brand new Ropes Course has also been added which is sure to challenge campers and staff. Other improvements have been made throughout camp this year.

This summer Campers are back in the Dining Hall for meals and Day Campers are camping overnight for the first time since 2019.

Please keep reading the Newsletter to learn what’s going on with both Minikani and the Alumni Community this year.

CAMP NEWS

Camp's 1919 Club



YMCA CAMP MINIKANI
1919 CLUB

Camp Minikani has just announced a new Giving Group – “1919 Club” – which will give you a chance to help support Camperships.

With a donation of \$19.19/month (or \$230/year) you’ll help give the gift of camp to someone who may need it the most. As a member of the 1919 Club you’ll receive:

- Special donor reports at our community events (Fall Festival, Cookie House, and Pancake Breakfast!)
- Annual Donor Report
- Summer tours of camp from Executive Director Eli Fyksen
- Recognition of your generosity on Camp
- Annual Update Letter from Executive Director
- 1919 Club Sticker and Membership Certificate

For more information or to join the 1919 Club use this link:
<https://www.minikani.org/donate/giving-groups/>



CAMP FOR ALL

Minikani has a new campaign that focuses on camper’s parents and gives them a chance to support future camperships. At the same time it allows these parents and others to highlight a specific staff member who truly embodies the Minikani Spirit.



CAMP FOR ALL gives the gift of camp to anyone, no matter their financial situation. Here is the link:
www.justgiving.com/campaign/campminikaniforall

Minikani has this to say about CAMP FOR ALL:

“You can find our staff’s giving pages on the right-hand side of the page and look for your child’s counselor to say a special thanks directly to them.”

“Our counselors consistently go above and beyond to make sure your camper has the time of their life here, so if your camper comes home and can’t stop talking about how great their counselor was, consider donating to their giving page!”

“All money donated goes directly to our campership fund, and this allows you to highlight a specific staff member who truly embodies the Minikani Spirit. Please consider donating today!”



White Ragers

Thirteen staff members are accepting the challenge of the White Rag this summer.

Sunday July 9th

- ❖ Will Caster
- ❖ Will Moran
- ❖ Robby Gal

Sunday July 16th

- ❖ Max Kroft

Sunday July 23rd

- ❖ Franklin Borre
- ❖ Chris Malicky
- ❖ Erica Kalberer

Sunday July 30th

- ❖ Anna Rooney
- ❖ Alex Hushek
- ❖ Jane Hudson

Sunday August 6th

- ❖ Gabby Oliveras-Bonaparte
- ❖ Sam Nord
- ❖ Rae Lord-Huertas

Congratulations to the newest White Ragers



Little Library

By Chloe Proebsting, Director
Wilderness Survival Area

This summer we are expanding our access to books with the new WSA/Trailblazer library! With the support of the MAC, we were able to fundraise to purchase the physical library from Barby the Book Fairy! Barby, or Barbera Cerda, is the founder of La Revo Books, <https://www.larevobooks.com/> which works to provide affordable and accessible books to the Milwaukee BIPOC community. Barby the Book Fairy also has a mission of distributing Little Free Libraries across the South Side of Milwaukee to lower income communities and our library's contributions went towards funding this mission.



With this new library, campers will be able to borrow books especially during downtimes like rest period and free time. We are always accepting donated books and aim to include nature-related books that can be used on WSA. If you have any books to donate, please reach out to the MAC group so we can coordinate how to get them in our library!
minikanistafflodge@gmail.com



Little Library ready to go on a post

Our little library was painted during Session 2 by WSA staff and kids who signed up for NART (Nature Art). We painted each side with a different base color and added personality like flowers with finger-print pedals from our kids and staff. We then weatherproofed the library so it could be set up on top of the Nodge Hill and across Cabin 8. This little library will be our second on camp (the other being outside the Health Center) and we look forward to seeing it be used and loved for many summers to come! Thank you to the MAC, Barbera, and everyone else who made this possible!



Bedding Project

By Hillary Lobenstein

This summer the MAC provided a grant for \$1,000 to be used towards bedding for 2023 Minikani international staff. Rachel Kornetsky suggested it was a wonderful way for the MAC to get involved in providing for the needs of our summer staff.

Ten international staff joined Minikani staff this summer. For this

project, the MAC purchased sheet sets, pillowcases, pillows, blankets, washcloths, bath towels, and beach towels from Target and Home Goods. All materials were new and freshly laundered. Each of the 10 international staff member received a large bag with these items. Alex Hushek, MAC board member, included a personal note to each international staff member as well.

We were also able to provide three Coleman mummy sleeping bags for international counselors to use on weekly campouts; these sleeping bags were added to the collection of sleeping bags Rachel has on hand for campers and staff.

In addition to the MAC grant, more alumni pitched in with the sleeping bag project. Jen Hense and Kendall Dowsett donated sleeping bags directly to Rachel Kornetsky; Emily Schieve donated money to fund the project. Thank you to Jen, Kendall, and Emily for taking the initiative to help out with this project!



5 of the 10 Bedding Bags

In addition to helping international staff out with necessities like bedding and towels, alumni can also host them for their day off. If interested in hosting an international staff member for their day off, contact Olivia Holbrook, Minikani Wellness Coordinator, or fill out this [online Google form](#).



MAC at Staff Training

By Hillary Lobenstein

On Thursday, June 15, 15 MAC members gathered at staff training to share stories of the past, offer advice, and enjoy the current camaraderie of Minikani staff. Eli Fyksen issued a reminder and warning not to divulge our ill-behaved adventures of the past; therefore, I did not speak of the time GU staff inserted multiple OMAAVs into the BU kybo stalls between the hours of 10 pm and midnight in the summer of 1995. I'm certain we could write an entire newsletter devoted to the wrongful and ill-advised adventures of MAC members during their time at camp.

Alumni members and current staff broke into smaller groups to discuss topics such as tips on being a counselor, life after camp, and how to use your Minikani connections to land a job. After discussion groups, it was time for dinner. Alumni members spread out to eat with currently staff members. Additionally, we were able to celebrate a long-held camp

tradition of singing to alum Heather Ullsvik for her birthday.

Rick and Mary Kokan shared what camp was like in the 1960s and 1970s. A number of staff from the 1980s and 1990s attended—Jen Peterson, Heather Ullsvik, Brett Haydin, and John Bolger. Finally, recent alumni from the late 2010s and 2020s also joined us, Will Ouimet, Sam Nord, Connor Robertson, and Gabby Oliveras-Bonaparte.

At the staff training alumni night, the MAC was able to provide a gift for current staff. This year we designed a sticker for water bottles and laptops. This sticker includes the MAC website information: www.minikanistafflodge.com to remind current staff of the MAC, a community in which they are already part of as current staff!



Robby Gral (Boy's Unit Director) and Rachel Kornetsky (Summer Program Director) welcoming MAC members at Staff Training.



Jen Peterson enjoying diner with the summer staff.



(L to R) Sam Nord, Hillary Phelps Lobenstein, Jen Peterson, Brett Haydin, John Bolger, Gabby Oliveras-Bonaparte, Connor Robertson, Will Ouimet, Rick Kokan, Mary Diers Kokan

Highlight: Gun 'N Run

By Ally Chung

GnR takes place in the prairie! The prairie is my favorite place on camp and always has been. As a camper I always signed up for archery and now archery is still my favorite skill!! This is my 5th year on GnR. This year the energy in the chateau is unlike ever before.



We have 24 staff members and we are all having so much fun together. Skills offered include archery, BBs, disc golf, slingshots, and various sports. Sports that GnR staff love to teach include basketball, baseball, kickball, dodgeball, volleyball, ballet, and flag football. All of these skills allow campers to grow in their responsibility capabilities, create new friendships, and further understand the value of teamwork.

Personal goals for GNR:

We have begun to step away from the name Gun n' Run and instead started to call GnR, Games n' Ranges this summer. I love this name because I really think it embodies the energy and the opportunities that this area can offer.



I also have taken on a personal passion to ensure campers and staff feel comfortable, confident, and safe with the skills offered from Games n' Ranges. I created an anonymous survey that was sent to staff prior to camp to understand how they felt specifically towards having .22 rifles on camp. As a result of this survey I learned 43% of staff wanted them to be discontinued, 33% wanted better safety measures to be taken, 13% wanted them to remain 10% felt neutral.

I think all of this is important to understand because, although we have historically always had .22 rifles offered, it does not mean that they continue to best serve the greater Minikani good. This year we will continue to run .22s, but only with RSO (Range Safety Officer) trained staff members and with further safety measures in place such as better eye protection.

Continued next page





Being a Skillhead I really get to be creative, but I also get to see a more logistical side of Camp Minikani. My priorities have become supporting my staff as much as I can, and being a role model and friend for campers whenever I can.

I'm so lucky to be able to lead this skill area. I forever and always will love GnR! Ducks fly together!!!

Quack quack,
Ally Chung



Songbook Trivia

How well do you know Minikani Songs? Here are 10 trivia questions from the song book. Answers can be found on page 7, or you can click on the icon here and download your very own .pdf copy of the song book. Enjoy!



1. What time of year would I wear Pink Pajamas?
A) Summer B) Winter
C) Spring D) All Year



2. Who shouted "Women & Children first" on the Titanic?
A) Mrs. Astor B) Mr. Astor
C) Cruise Director D) Captain
3. Where have all the flowers gone?
A) Soldiers B) Young Girls
C) Young Men D) Graveyards
4. Which is **NOT** seen by a yodeling Austrian?
A) 2 Cuckoo Birds B) Skier
C) St. Bernard D) Movie Star
5. Where was Nellie when the cow kicked her?
A) Barn B) Pasture
C) School D) Church
6. Which of your body parts wobble and can be tied in a knot??
A) Fingers B) Elbows
C) Knees D) Ears
7. Had a little dog, skinny as a rail, he had what all over his tail?
A) Hairs B) Fleas
C) Paint D) Ice cream
8. Which is **NOT** mentioned in the Minikani Spirit Song?
A) Clean Cabins B) Square Life
C) Amy Belle D) Living Every Day
9. Who "Whooped his head and tail right off"?
A) Johnny Rebeck B) A Blue Jay
C) Little Rabbit Foo Foo
D) A Great Big Bear
10. Who is **NOT** mentioned in the Mountain Dew Song?
A) Father Abraham B) Uncle Bill
C) Uncle Mort D) Auntie Sue

Check Your Answers on page 7

Successful Giving

The MAC would like to thank all 36 members who reached into their 'pockets' and donated to this year's "May Giving Month". Together they gave **\$4,557.00** to our community. You can see most of their names listed on our website <http://minikanistafflodge.com/contributors/>

We will use this money to give back to Minikani in three ways:
1) Support their Campership Fund,
2) Support Minikani's Annual Capital Campaign, and 3) Allow us to make specific gifts to camp. (See the article on page 3 on this year's "Bedding Project".)



Just as a reminder, we are a 100% volunteer organization. We are a qualified nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization with the IRS and donations are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.

Membership in our community is open to anyone who has worked at Minikani. We have no dues or fees for membership. Our "Most Senior" member was a counselor in 1954, 69 years ago. Our "Least Senior" members are working at Minikani right now this summer!



Ad Staff Wish List

By Kendall Dowsett

Hello Alumni Community! On behalf of **Christopher Malicky** (current Assistant Summer Program Director) and the 2023 Ad Staff, please read for a fun new way that alumni can contribute directly to Summer Camp fun!!

For any alumni who have been on Ad Staff in the past, it will come as no surprise that many Unit Directors and Skill Heads end up spending a lot of their own money (from their own teeny weeny paychecks) to boost morale and treat their counselors to something that'll keep their energy up. This is especially true in the second half of the summer, when days are HOT and energy reserves are diminishing but the kids just keep on comin'.

For this reason, Chris has asked if we would share this **Ad Staff Wish List** with you all! These monetary donations would be distributed by Chris to the Skill Head or Unit Director of your choice and would greatly help alleviate the financial strain that many Ad Staff members experience as summer goes on--plus we all know just how great it feels to chug a Mountain Dew between skill hours! (See next column)

- ### Ad Staff Wish List
- ◆ \$200 towards GU Night in (2 per summer, \$400 total)
 - ◆ \$200 towards BU Night in (2 per summer, \$400 total)
 - ◆ \$100 towards Skill Nights (6 altogether, \$600 total)
 - ◆ \$50 toward Staff Affairs (4 altogether, \$200 total)
 - ◆ \$25 for a Skill Head of your choice to buy a case of Mountain Dew for their staff (unlimited)
 - ◆ \$20 for Skill Heads to buy snacks for their staff (unlimited)

Contributions (**in full or partial amounts!**) can be sent directly to Christopher Malicky via Venmo using the handle @Christopher-Malicky. If you are making a donation to a skill or unit area, make sure to **indicate which area you're donating to!** Chris has also asked that alumni **include a phone number or email address** so that Alex Hushek can send you a picture of the 2023 staff members enjoying the fruits of your labor!

If you do not have Venmo but would still like to contribute, please email Christopher Malicky (chrismalicky@gmail.com) for other options!



The MAC will be selecting additional Board Members next month - watch your email for details.

Minikani Songbook Trivia Answers from page 6

Answer Key: 1) A, 2) D, 3) B, 4) D, 5) A, 6) D, 7) B, 8) A, 9) B, 10) A

10 correct: A Song Scholar
 6-9 correct: Great Job!
 3-5 correct: Thanks for playing
 0-2 correct: Click [HERE](#) for your own .pdf copy the Minikani Songbook



SpotLight On Alumni

Erika Ballentine

◆ **What is your history at Camp?**

After several years of watching my two older brothers and their friends spend weeks at camp, I finally tagged along at age 9 in 2005. I feel so lucky to have one of those brothers (Ryan Ballentine) continue on at camp with me until we were both on Ad Staff.



I was an LT from 2011-2013, Counselor from 2014-2016 Adventure Challenge Director in 2017, and an Explorer Unit Director in 2018. Although I was AC director for one year, my 3 years as a counselor I worked on Gun n Run. Definitely the two best skill areas!!

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

I loved everything to do with the Explorer program. Some of my lifelong friends were campers with me in the EU (and later counselors together). Of course my favorite



years working at Minikani were the summers spent on the Hill, both as a third year Explorer counselor and my last summer as Director.

I loved the unique sense of pride and community that being on the Hill provided. I loved getting outside the bubble of Hubertus and doing something new, often taking kids on their first “real” camping trip. I also think the age of Explorer campers is crucial to their development as high schoolers and adults, and I loved (hopefully) instilling some good values as well as have fun and create lifelong memories.

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

When I need a pick me up song, I listen to Good Day by Nappy Roots. Immediately takes me back to being 13 years old in the back seat of the Star Trans jamming out on our drive up to Rhinelander.

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

The energy that came with opening day is unmatched! Chants in the dining hall, the nervous energy of first time campers, learning the unit cheers-- Even if you were burnt out from a previous week, the energy and potential that

came with a new group of campers gave me such a rejuvenated spirit.

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

I wanted to spend one last summer after college graduation (2018) at camp. I feel super fortunate that this could be a reality for me. My first job after camp was back in St. Louis where I went to school. I recall ‘hiding’ in the lower office one day at lunch to have a phone interview.

I can specifically remember apologizing to my future manager for all my “name a time when...” answers being about camp, rather than healthcare since that’s the zone I was in at the time. She laughed and said it worked - and hired me by the end of the phone call.

◆ **You are now a Labor and Delivery nurse at Froedtert. Do you think working at camp helps you in your career?**

I have never really thought about this, since the populations worked with are vastly different. But now



Continued next page

that you've got me reflecting... I think they are certainly related.

My summer as Explorer Director brought me a sense of independence and problem solving, learning to think through tough situations, and calm but direct communication—whether camper dynamics or actual medical emergencies. Of course these same skills are crucial for me as a nurse as well.

I also think it's super important in my job as an L&D nurse to create quick bonds and build a sense of trust between me and my patients and their support people so I can advocate best for them. At camp, we all had to spend opening day quickly becoming acquainted with our new campers and make them feel comfortable in their new space.

I'll also shout out to several alumni/spouses of alumni I've gotten to either take care of, visit, or reach out to who have delivered at Froedtert!! You know who you are. "Y'all are the rock stars!" In the future, if anyone reading this ever finds them self in that situation, please feel free to reach out to me. ☺

◆ If you could go back and relive just one Special Day or Camp Activity, what would that be?

Kangaroo Court, without a doubt. I definitely found myself guilty of a few things throughout the years, but a standout was my punishment for "being trash" where I had to spend the rest of the hour of evening activity in a trash can painted green and eating cookies like Oscar the Grouch. I did get a great view of my friend Allison Mitchell being forced to eat a pan of baked beans that I'll never forget.



Erika in a Trash Can

◆ Do you have a favorite Minikani meal??

French toast sticks for breakfast or snack wraps for lunch. I'm a simple foodie.

◆ Anything else to share?

I'm beyond proud to be a part of such a life changing group of people! I have so many memories from each one of you who were either my counselor or director, and I love seeing what everyone is up to in their lives now.

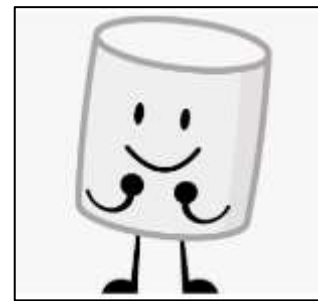


New Ropes Course 2023

Marshmallows

It's hard for me to think of "Cabin Campfires" at camp on Sunday evenings without thinking of marshmallows. As you know, roasting them over a camp fire produces certain fruity, nutty and buttery flavors that smell and taste so good. It also produces the satisfying golden color.

"My favorite vegetable is the marshmallow." Jim Gaffigan



Marshmallows themselves go way back. Egyptians enjoyed the gooey treat 2,000 BC. They squeezed the sap from a common plant, called the Mallow, which still today grows wild in marshes. French candy makers updated the recipe in the mid 1800's by whipping the Mallow plant sap into fluffy candy molds.

In 1948 candy makers in the US patented an extrusion process by running the ingredients through tubes and then cutting them into pieces, hence the round shape of a marshmallow with flat ends. Today marshmallows are made of gelatin, corn syrup, starch, sugar and water.

Americans eat over 90 million pounds of marshmallows every year, with about 50% of those being roasted on a campfire. Great memories.



Nature Notes

By Bruce

Remember the dragonflies we'd see at camp? You couldn't go near the boating area, walk along the trail to 18 & 19, or anywhere near Mud Lake without seeing them on a sunny summer day. Darting back and forth and soaring through the air – they went about their business, simply ignoring anyone in their way.



Some campers were afraid when they saw them. You probably put the kids at ease by saying something like "Don't worry. They can't sting you - they don't have a stinger! And they never bite." You probably didn't go any farther, but you could have added the truth: "Dragonflies are flat-out terrifying if you're any kind of a small bug. They're so skilled at killing that they have up to a 97% success rate when hunting."

Compare that to a lion or a shark, whose success at catching and killing its prey may be as high as 12% of the time it tries. Now you know the little dragonfly has

something that really makes it a powerful hunter. They catch prey with their feet, tear off the prey's wings with their sharp jaws so it can't escape, then scarf the sorry bug down, all without even needing to land. A dragonfly can consume their own body weight in bugs each half hour. It's just lucky for us that mosquitoes are one of their very favorite victims.

How can they be such good killing machines? Adults have their muscles attached directly to their wings. This allows them to fly faster than other insects – at a speed up to 34 mph. They can fly forward, backward, and upside-down, and also hover and pivot in place. They are ravenous predators of flies and mosquitos, and, well, just about any insect they can catch.



Dragonfly Nymph

Eggs laid in water will hatch into larvae called "nymphs". This begins their career as a savage, little predator, living underwater for 2- 6 years, eating other insect larvae, (including mosquito larvae), tadpoles, fish, and yes, even other dragonfly larvae. When they finally leave the water and transition to adults on land they don't live long – maybe only another 7-56 days. Just enough time to mate and lay eggs for the next generation.



At 3 1/2" long, the female Swamp Darner is the largest dragonfly that occurs in Wisconsin and one of the largest in the U.S.

Dragonflies are older than dinosaurs, evolving about 300 million years ago. Their ancestors, *Meganeura*, had a giant wingspan of over two feet, and were probably the first insects to fly. Modern dragonflies have wingspans of about two to five inches. More than 5,000 species have been described around the world with about 110 kinds living in Wisconsin.



For many centuries people have thought of the dragonfly as a symbol of Happiness, New Beginnings, and Change. How appropriate that dragonflies at Minikani are such positive symbols for all of us. (Aren't you glad people didn't choose those alternative symbols – Bloodthirsty, Terrifying Killers? They could have, you know!)

