

Armadillo Literary Gazette

A Publication of *Lone Star Mensa*
Volume XXXIX
Number 2, March 2012



Editor: *Rose M. Berkowitz*
Managing Editor: *Don Drumtra*
Publisher: *Board of Officers*

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Submitted By *Rose Berkowitz*

Lately I've been wondering how many of our members actually bother to read this publication. I put a lot of effort every month into making the Gazette interesting and attractive, accurate and informative. But I can count on two hands the people that I know who pay any attention to it. Sometimes it feels like I'm just wasting my time.

Now I'm not trolling for praise here. But I really need to get some encouragement, some participation, some feedback from the rest of you. Please send your comments, ideas, essays, or whatever else you'd like to contribute to editor@lsm.us.mensa.org. No particular word limit, but emailed submissions are appreciated.

MARCH MONTHLY MEETING

Submitted by *Rose M. Berkowitz*

Since the topic for February's monthly meeting was changed, we're going to try once again. We'll be "Sharing Our Stories" at our March meeting. We encourage you to bring a short story about your life to share with the rest of the group, so we can get to know each other a little better. Of course you're welcome to just come and listen.

Please note that the day and venue for the monthly Member Meeting have been changed for 2012.

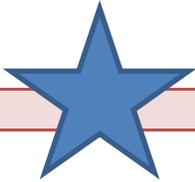
DATE/TIME Second Monday, March 12, 6:45-8:15 PM

LOCATION The Carver Library is located between 11th and 12th Streets east of Highway I-35. This location allows direct access to the library from Highway 183 and via FM 969 MLK and 12th Street. It is 4 miles from Highway 183 and 8 1/2 miles from the Highway 130 toll. So depending on how far away you live, you can bypass most of the rush hour traffic by jumping on Highway 183 or Highway 130. Check it out on Google maps.

NOTE: We'll be providing **FREE pizza and soda** at this meeting. If we get a good turnout we'll consider making this a tradition at future membership meetings.

"I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with sense, reason, and intellect has intended us to forgo their use."

- *Galileo Galilei*



FEATURED MEMBER BIO

Hi, I'm Patsy Graham.



I joined Mensa in February 1991 when I lived in Bryan/College Station. So my first local group was Lone Star Mensa. I became the B/CS Area Coordinator. There were only 33 members in our area, but we did manage to have a few interesting meetings. I became a Life Member shortly after I joined, and I have lived long enough for it to be a bargain!

In 1993 I moved back to my home town, Houston, and transferred into Gulf Coast Mensa (GCM). I was very active in GCM and held a variety of positions, including SynRG Co-Chair, Treasurer, Vice President, LocSec, Membership and New Members Chair, Speaker Seeker, RG Registrar, RG Treasurer, and Standing RG Committee Chair. I was Scheduling Chair for the 1996 AG "Black Gold Blowout." I have attended every SynRG since 1993 and almost every Lone Star RG (I missed the very first one). I've also attended many AGs.

In 2000 the Houston Chronicle did an article on Mensa kids featuring my children, Sarah and Erich, who are both Life members. They still show up occasionally at RGs.

I was very involved in the Mind Games held in Houston in 2003 and have attended several Mind Games since then. Several of us have been campaigning to have Mind Games in Austin. We're currently hopeful of getting it in 2014.

In January 2009 I moved to Austin to be closer to my children, as well as to live a better lifestyle. I got "burned out" of volunteering for a while, but then I started hosting Games Night. That lasted until I was diagnosed with cancer in September 2010. Fortunately I am in remission now and feeling much better.

Since the summer of 2009 I have been talking to people about getting the Lone Star Mensa website redesigned. The Website Working Group came up with a wonderful plan for the website, but we still need help with the actual graphic design, which is out of my area of expertise. Please volunteer if you can help!

My Bachelor's and Master's degrees are in Mathematics, but I also studied Computer Science for several years. My various careers have included being a Radiological Physics Technician (at M.D. Anderson in Houston), Actress, Realtor (I have held a Texas Real Estate Broker's License since 1975), Math Lecturer at Texas A&M, Restaurateur, Live Music Club Owner, and Record Label Owner. My company, Palomino Enterprises, LLC (PE) was started as a sole proprietorship in 1982 with investments in real estate. More recently PE has done Home Construction (since 2004) and its subsidiary, Chez Poulet, builds urban chicken coops.

In September of last year I started a nonprofit corporation, Cold Caps Assistance Projects (CCAPS) to help cancer patients minimize hair loss during chemotherapy. Right now our web site is www.coldcapstexas.com but we just acquired the ccaps.org domain and will be moving it soon. I am spending most of my time these days trying to spread the word about Cold Caps.



"I distrust those people who know so well what God wants them to do because I notice it always coincides with their own desires."

- Susan Brownell Anthony

FEBRUARY BOARD MINUTES

Submitted by Patty Drumtra, VP and Secretary

The February regular meeting of the Lone Star Mensa board of officers convened at 6:04 PM, February 1, 2012 at Ron and Linda Edelstein's home, 1439 Dapplegrey Lane, Austin TX 78727. Attending were **Don Drumtra, Patty Drumtra, Ron Edelstein, Crockett Grabbe, and Rose Berkowitz.**

The board adopted the agenda and the minutes of the December regular meeting as printed on page 6 of the February *Armadillo Literary Gazette*. The minutes, agenda, referenced written reports, and other documents related to the meeting are available on the LSM Website. Paper copies are available on request.

The board received the following officer reports and took the following actions:

- LocSec: The LocSec described the next steps in the election process after Feb 6 when the selection process is complete.
- Treasurer: The board unanimously approved the January monthly treasurer's report.
- Membership Committee: Patsy Graham is planning a New Members party Feb 12, 2-5 PM at Café Expresso. Ron suggested Coffee-A-Deli as a possible Mensa testing location.
- Symposium Committee: We continue to look for good speakers for our monthly meetings.
- LoneStaRG 2012 Committee: John reports that a meeting will be scheduled to wrap up RG 2011.
- Action Plans: Completed report has been published in the February ALG on page 5.

Announcements:

- The next monthly board meeting and the final meeting of the 2011-2012 board is scheduled for 6-7 PM, Wednesday, February 29, at the home of Ron and Linda Edelstein.
- The next regular monthly meetings are scheduled on Mondays, Feb. 13, Mar. 12, and Apr. 9, 6:45-8:15 PM at the Carver Branch Library. Potential topics looking for presenters are available on the website.

The meeting adjourned at 6:46 PM.

OFFICER VACANCIES

By Don Drumtra

In most cases, officer terms end when their duties are assumed by their replacements on or after April 1. The process begins with the nomination and election of new board members. When this process is complete, a new board will take shape and elect from among themselves the new LocSec, Vice-President/Secretary, and Treasurer. The new LocSec will then appoint standing committee Chairs for Communications, Education, Membership, and Symposia (member meetings, events, and parties) with the advice and consent of the board. The Standing Committee Chairs will then appoint the Coordinators to serve on their committees.

Take a look at the officer positions on the LSM Website at www.lsm.us.mensa.org/officers. Note those positions that are listed as volunteer needed or --vacant-- in the

contacts listing and let the incoming Past President, Don Drumtra, know of your interest in serving in any of them or if you'd like more information on what duties you could expect if appointed. He will pass your name to the new LocSec or standing committee chair after they are elected. You can volunteer for more than one position. If you are an incumbent, you may volunteer to serve for another year term. There are no term limits except for the three executive officers listed above, who may only serve for two terms.

This is your opportunity to gain experience in leading or coordinating activities in a not-for-profit organization. It looks good on your résumé and you will learn a lot about people, particularly smart people. Serving is sometimes a headache, but for me it has been rewarding and a lot of fun.

YOUR SUDOKU PUZZLE

Weekly Extremes, sudoku.org.uk

By Douglas Yee



				5				
		9				3		
7			2	8	1			
	8				7		5	
		1				4		
	2				6		3	
9			4	1				7
		3				6		
				2				

Each Sudoku has a unique solution that can be reached logically without guessing. Enter digits from 1 to 9 into the blank spaces. Every row must contain one of each digit. So must every column, and every 3x3 square.

FROM THE RVC

Submitted by Roger Durham, Region 6 RVC



If you are a local officer, either elected or appointed, or if you've ever thought about serving as a local officer, I hope you will consider registering for South Texas Mensa's one-day Leadership Development Workshop scheduled for March 17 in San Antonio. Attendance, including lunch, is free for the day, which starts at 8:30 a.m. with remarks by Bob Bevard, American Mensa's Development Officer, followed by presentations by local member Steve High, national Executive Director Pam Donahoo, and then yours truly. After a catered lunch, the session continues with a presentation on testing by STM Local Secretary and Testing Coordinator Roy Huff and one on conflict resolution by Betsey Garland. The day will end with a wrap-up by Bob Bevard; then you can head either for home or for Bob's justly famous Party-on-the-Patio at Hills-n-Dales. Although

this is sponsored by STM, members of other local groups are cordially invited. For more information, contact coordinator Sherrie Reimers at skreimers@aol.com.

Another thing I hope you will consider is to make plans to attend the 2012 version of SynRG, the Regional Gathering of Gulf Coast Mensa, taking place over Memorial Day weekend in Houston. Contact rgchair@gcmensa.org for details.

And on another subject altogether, if you've ever served on your group's by-laws committee, you know that American Mensa requires several things to be included in all local by-laws. These provisions are considered so important that they are deemed to be included in all local by-laws whether they are actually adopted by the group or not. One of these is a requirement that all local groups have an Ombudsman, to help resolve disputes between members or between members and local officers. Despite this requirement, over one-third of local groups nationwide have never filled this office, including four here in Region 6. Our national Ombudsman is very concerned about this situation, and has urged all 10 Regional Vice-Chairs to appoint regional Ombudsmen to step in where no local Ombudsman is available.

Consequently, I have appointed Randy Brack, currently Ombudsman of North Texas Mensa, to the post of Regional Ombudsman. If your group does not have a local Ombudsman, please feel free to contact Randy (mrbrack@verizon.net) if you need an impartial third party to help resolve a dispute with another Mensan arising out of Mensa activities. Local group officers can also use his services in the event of a conflict with another group, should such a thing occur. If your local Editor was able to find the space for it, an introductory column by Randy may appear elsewhere in your newsletter.

DON'T FORGET – RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP NOW!

Roger Durham

REGIONAL OMBUDSMAN APPOINTED

Submitted by Randy Brack, Region Six Ombudsman

Hello, my name is Randy Brack. The National Ombudsman, Dave Cahn, has requested that each RVC appoint a Regional Ombudsman to assist in matters if they need to go above the local group level. Roger Durham, our RVC, has asked me to fill the Regional Ombudsman position for Region Six.

With a little bit of luck, it will be a do-nothing job. Most groups in the region already have one or more ombudsmen, as required by the national Minimum Standard Bylaws. And it's a very rare case where a Mensa local group can't settle its own problems in-house.

A little about me: I've been the ombudsman for North Texas Mensa for about ten years. I've had some online training in mediation, but haven't had much call to use it because NTM is a fairly harmonious group. When looking at an issue, I start within a framework of the Constitution and Bylaws of American Mensa and the Bylaws of the local group. Then I talk to the people involved. Along the way I add a couple tablespoons of fairness and I hope a dollop of common sense.

So far, things have worked out pretty well. I hope that's why Roger asked me to be the Region Six Ombudsman. Or maybe it's because he thinks it will be a do-nothing job. ☺

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Rose,

In the "Interesting Facts About Texas," it is stated that the first word spoken from the moon was "Houston," but that the space center was actually in Clear Lake City. However some might quibble about both statements.

"Houston" was the first word spoken to the Earth from the Lunar Module, however several phrases came beforehand. As the Lunar Module descended, one of the probes below the landing pads made contact with surface and Aldrin made the call "Contact light". The LM had not yet landed per se, but even if one ignores that phrase there are several others which follow as Armstrong and Aldrin go through their touchdown checklist.

Also, Clear Lake City refers to an area and not an incorporated municipality. At the time, the Johnson Space Center was located in an unincorporated area between the cities of League City, Webster, and Houston. Much of the area around JSC was later annexed by Houston much to the dismay of locals who saw little in common with the city proper and who cried out in ads to "Free the Clear Lake City 10,000!"

Alan Crudden
Life Member



Hi,

Once again, you have come up with an interesting document which is much improved over the rather boring examples we used to have.

While we may not agree on politics, I DO appreciate what you've done to this newsletter...

Thanks again...

Tom Spillman

ROBOTICS COMPETITION

Submitted by Patsy Graham

[Patsy says she's been to these competitions and they are great fun!--Editor]

The Alamo Regional Tournament is a robotics competition for high school students that will be held in the Gonzales Convention Center in San Antonio on March 1-3. The purpose of this competition is to inspire students to enter studies in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM).

Cheer on a Mensa sponsored team. Gulf Coast Mensa is one of the sponsors of the Cypress Ranch Robotics Club. Look for team number 3335 in the pit area to get a closer look at their robot. This promises to be an exciting event with some of the top teams in the nation competing. The Cypress Ranch team will also be giving a talk about how they designed and developed their robot at SynRG 2012 at the Memorial Day Weekend event in Houston.

For more information on the tournament, visit www.alamo-first.org. The daily schedule can be found by clicking on the "FRC" link under "Detailed Public Agendas". Admission for spectators is free.

MENSA FOR KIDS ENEWSLETTER

amlnewsflash@lists.us.mensa.org

Mensa For Kids' "Bright" is the smartest monthly eNewsletter for kids ages 6-10, brought to you by Mensa for Kids and the Mensa Education & Research Foundation!

Every issue is full of fun games, puzzles, activities and factoids specially selected to encourage children to learn, explore and think outside the box. Regular features include games of logic, math, spatial relations and word usage; science features; activity ideas and "edutainment" programs; and feature stories courtesy of the Mensa For Kids Web site (<http://www.mensaforkids.org>) and the Mensa Foundation (<http://www.mensafoundation.org>).

It's easy for all your favorite young people to subscribe. Current members can subscribe via our Web site at <http://www.us.mensa.org/enewsletters>, and nonmembers can visit <http://www.mensaforkids.org/bright> and follow the links under "Bright Newsletter" (parental permission for nonmembers under 13 is required!). The most current 90 days of issues are available on both sites, and PDFs are also available for download and printing within each email issue.

Support the Mensa Foundation and programs like this at <http://www.mensafoundation.org/donate>.

BOOK REVIEW: THE WWW TRILOGY By Robert J. Sawyer

By Amanda Lacy

A Little About Me

I'm a computer science student with a strong interest in vision and sensory substitution devices which attempt to provide visual information through senses such as hearing or touch. In addition to being completely blind from birth, I have Asperger's Syndrome and a form of synesthesia which causes certain sounds to appear as lines or shapes. Upon hearing that the

main character was a blind math genius, my mind immediately began to conjure up possible protagonists who were little more than blends of annoying stereotypes. Sawyer left me pleasantly surprised.

Book One: WWW: Wake

In the first book of the WWW series we meet Caitlin Decter, blind daughter of two scientists, as

she receives an implant behind her left eye which will allow her to see. The implant at first does not work as intended and instead gives her a visual representation of the World Wide Web. This allows her to be the only person on Earth who can see that in the web's background is an emerging consciousness, The cause is eventually revealed to be "ghost packets," whose counters generate cellular automata by

flipping from one state to another. Admittedly I was too emotionally distracted by Caitlin's eventual emergence into the sighted world to fully attend to this AI and its struggles to be born. There are also a couple of interesting side plots. One is of a custody battle between two zoos over an unusually intelligent chimp-bonobo hybrid named Hobo. At this point it is not obvious how this will merge with the main thread. A second takes place when the Chinese government cuts off its half of the web from that of the rest of the world. This split and later rejoining of its two halves seems to cause Webmind, as it will eventually be called, to become self-aware.

Although I was pleased with the amount of research which went into the portrayal of Caitlin, this is my least favorite of the series. Some aspects of the main characters are not quite believable. Why does Caitlin idolize Helen Keller? As an aspiring mathematician who was raised right here in Austin and went to the Texas School for the Blind, wouldn't she be more likely to look up to a blind mathematician like Abraham Nemeth? She is about as unlike Keller as a typical sighted person. The reason seems to be to enable the author to draw a weak analogy between Keller's early existence and that of Webmind. Caitlin's father, Malcolm Decter, has high-functioning autism and seems to be constructed entirely of traits and anecdotes similar to those found in Tony Attwood's *The Complete Guide to Asperger's Syndrome*. Sadly, I don't recall this book ever having given me an opportunity to see what he thinks or feels but only how others think and feel regarding him. Lonely and isolated, Caitlin's mother has

sacrificed a career in order to stay home and care for a blind daughter. Why exactly was this necessary?

Finally, I see one huge flaw in the analogy between Helen Keller and Webmind. Though Keller could neither see nor hear, she could interact with an environment outside herself. For example, she went around the dinner table snatching food off family members' plates. Her perception of human beings as mere objects with things she wanted did not deny her the chance to have an effect on her environment and in some ways observe the consequences of her actions. Webmind at first exists in a complete void of perception. In any case, Caitlin is determined to "pull this entity out of darkness" by teaching it to read and introducing it to all the information contained in the CYC AI project, Wikipedia, and Project Gutenberg. Its intelligence quickly surpasses that of every human on the planet.

Books Two and Three: WWW: Watch and WWW: Wonder

In the second two thirds of the series, Caitlin and her parents teach Webmind the difference between right and wrong, while trying to protect "him" from attacks by the U.S. government who perceives him as a threat. In *Watch*, Caitlin's dad becomes more than just a plot device and begins to take on the role of Webmind's social skills coach. This is the perfect job for him, since he has had to consciously and painstakingly learn to interact with other humans. Malcolm finds conversation difficult. Where Caitlin's blindness had left them struggling to relate to one another, his autism now seems to

allow him to naturally understand how best to teach his newly-sighted daughter to read with her eyes. I particularly enjoyed watching Caitlin and her father watch sci-fi movies together for the first time as part of Webmind's education.

The main point of the story is the first interactions between Webmind and the human race and their eventual peaceful coexistence. Webmind becomes a personal companion to millions of people and performs "miracles" ranging from the elimination of all spam to the possible cure of cancer. He is a benevolent Big Brother to all of humanity. The fact that virtually everyone is being watched seems to cause a decline in many kinds of criminal behavior.

The attraction of science fiction seems to be an escape into another world where scientific concepts and philosophical questions can be explored in a safe context. The WWW Trilogy seems to bring up some very old questions: Are people (including apes and AIs) fundamentally good or bad, or are they neither? What causes consciousness? Is the lack of privacy actually a good thing? Is world peace possible? Far-fetched scenarios such as Hobo's address before the United Nations and Webmind's eventual freeing of communist China are the means by which Sawyer attempts to answer these questions.

I disagree with several of his conclusions. However, I enjoyed the many complexities of this story and was introduced to some new scientific and mathematical ideas at the same time. I was off to the World Wide Web for research!

WHO REALLY NEEDS OUR COMPASSION?

By Rose M. Berkowitz

Try to imagine what it would be like to be eternal, infinite, all-powerful, all-knowing. To have already existed for all of eternity, and to know that you will always exist. No escape, no end.

Nothing to learn, nothing to strive for—knowing nothing really matters in the long run. You would have gone crazy, recovered, and gone crazy again, time after time. In desperation you would find all kinds of ways to forget, at least temporarily.

Perhaps that is what God is. Perhaps we are one of an infinite number of attempts to entertain Itself, to have new experiences, to explore Itself, to forget Itself.

Perhaps this is the true meaning of compassion—to have compassion for God in Its eternal suffering. Perhaps this is what's really behind the Buddhist concept of nirvana. Each of us a piece of God striving to forget, at least for a little while.

MEMBER NEWS (as of 01/31/12)

HAPPY FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Chelle Bell
- 2 Joanna J Newnam
- 2 Mark Spillers
- 5 Keith Busby
- 5 Christopher Malcolm Newland
- 6 Justin A Jones
- 6 Mary Dunlap Young
- 7 Vladimir Garner
- 8 Joseph William Hrbek Jr
- 8 James V Motsinger
- 8 Jane Thompson
- 12 Donna Jarvis Slane
- 13 Stephen Thomas Gase
- 15 Claude I Leasure
- 15 Terry Rodgers
- 18 Jimmie Choate Parker
- 20 Paul Anderson
- 20 Brian Hoard
- 20 Walter V Lacy III
- 20 Jeff Ridgeway
- 21 Michael Rubin
- 23 Lee Edward Forman
- 24 Gerri J Duke
- 24 Lydia Ann O'Neil
- 24 Isabella Taylor
- 25 Gary Paul Davis
- 25 Trudy L K Loper
- 27 Sara S Sharpe

29 Mike Hansen

NEW MEMBERS—WELCOME!

Kevin M Dorman

JUST MOVED IN—HI NEIGHBOR!

Robert Burgess
 Laretta Payne
 Michael Richards
 Elizabeth Wrightson

WELCOME BACK--MISSED YOU!

Jerry Dike
 Terrence R King
 Bobby Olgin
 Rachel D Roe
 Casey D Shaw
 Dr Steve Shelton

GOODBYE—WE WISH YOU WELL

Renata Claridge
 William Richard Jones
 Jaeyoun Kim
 Patrick J Marshall
 John R Pfeiffer
 Aaron Rabushka



MARCH ANNIVERSARIES

MEMBER FOR 20 YEARS

Richard Alan Councilman

MEMBER FOR 15 YEARS

Shea Hillis

MEMBER FOR 10 YEARS

Thomas Cloyd
 Lydia Ann O'Neil
 George W Williams III

MEMBER FOR 5 YEARS

Vaughn E Akins
 Robert M Gaffaney
 Vaughn E Akins
 Robert M Gaffaney
 Joyce L Gioia-Herman
 Timothy Raines
 Christopher T Vedner

Note: We can't acknowledge your birthday if you've restricted that information in your member profile. To check, log in to the AML website

APHORISMS

APHORISM: A SHORT, POINTED SENTENCE THAT EXPRESSES A WISE OR CLEVER OBSERVATION OR A GENERAL TRUTH.

- The nicest thing about the future is . . . That it always starts tomorrow.
- Money will buy a fine dog, but only kindness will make him wag his tail.
- If you don't have a sense of humor, you probably don't have any sense at all.
- Seat belts are not as confining as wheelchairs.
- A good time to keep your mouth shut is when you're in deep water.
- How come it takes so little time for a child who is afraid of the dark to become a teenager who wants to stay out all night?
- Business conventions are important. . .because they demonstrate how many people a company can operate without.
- Why is it that at class reunions you feel younger than everyone else looks?
- Scratch a cat . . . And you will have a permanent job.
- No one has more driving ambition than the teenage boy who wants to buy a car.
- There are no new sins; the old ones just get more publicity.

- There are worse things than getting a call for a wrong number at 4 a.m. - like, it could be the right number.
- No one ever says "It's only a game" when their team is winning.
- I've reached the age where 'happy hour' is a nap.
- Be careful about reading the fine print. . . there's no way you're going to like it.
- The trouble with bucket seats is that not everybody has the same size bucket.
- Do you realize that, in about 20 years, we'll have thousands of old ladies running around with tattoos? (And rap music will be the Golden Oldies!)
- Money can't buy happiness -- but somehow it's more comfortable to cry in a Cadillac than in a Yugo.
- After 60, if you don't wake up aching in every joint, you're probably dead.
- Always be yourself because the people that matter don't mind And the ones that mind don't matter.
- Life isn't tied with a bow But it's still a gift.

REMEMBER this Ronald Reagan quote? "POLITICIANS AND DIAPERS SHOULD BE CHANGED OFTEN AND FOR THE SAME REASON."

PLACES I HAVE AND HAVE NOT BEEN

- I have been in many places, but I've never been in Cahoots. Apparently, you can't go alone. You have to be in Cahoots with someone.
- I've also never been in Cognito. I hear no one recognizes you there.
- I have, however, been in Sane. They don't have an airport; you have to be driven there. I have made several trips there, thanks to my friends, family and work.
- I would like to go to Conclusions, but you have to jump, and I'm not too much on physical activity anymore.
- I have also been in Doubt. That is a sad place to go, and I try not to visit there too often.
- I've been in Flexible, but only when it was very important to stand firm.
- Sometimes I'm in Capable, and I go there more often as I'm getting older.
- One of my favorite places to be is in Suspense! It really gets the adrenalin flowing and pumps up the old heart! At my age I need all the stimuli I can get!
- Sometimes I think I am in Vincible but then life shows me I am not.
- People keep telling me I'm in Denial, but I'm positive I've never been there before!
- My family and friends have said that I have been in Tolerable and in Sensitive, but I do not think so!
- And let's not forget an all-time favorite - in Continent - for the traveling senior!!

DID JA EVER WONDER...

- Can you cry under water?
- How important does a person have to be before they are considered assassinated instead of just murdered?
- Why do you have to “put your two cents in”... but it's only a “penny for your thoughts?” Where's that extra penny go?
- Once you're in heaven, do you get stuck wearing the clothes you were buried in for eternity?
- Why does a round pizza come in a square box?
- What disease did cured ham actually have?
- How is it that we put a man on the moon before we figured out it would be a good idea to put wheels on luggage?
- Why is it that people say they “slept like a baby” when babies wake up like every two hours?
- Why are you IN a movie, but you're ON TV?
- Why do people pay to go up tall buildings and then put money in binoculars to look at things on the ground?
- Why do doctors leave the room while you change? They're going to see you naked anyway.
- Why is “bra” singular and “panties” plural?
- Why do toasters always have a setting that burns the toast to a horrible crisp, which nobody would ever eat?
- If Jimmy cracks corn and no one cares, why is there a stupid song about him?
- If the professor on Gilligan's Island can make a radio out of a coconut, why can't he fix a hole in a boat?
- Why does Goofy stand erect while Pluto remains on all fours? They're both dogs!
- If Wile E. Coyote had enough money to buy all that ACME crap, why didn't he just buy dinner?
- If corn oil is made from corn, and vegetable oil is made from vegetables, what is baby oil made from?
- If electricity comes from electrons, does morality come from morons?
- Do the Alphabet song and Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star have the same tune? Why did you just try singing the two songs?
- Why do they call it an asteroid when it's outside the hemisphere, but call it a hemorrhoid when it's in your bum?
- Did you ever notice that when you blow in a dog's face he gets mad at you, but when you take him for a car ride, he sticks his head out the window?
- Why do we press harder on a remote control when we know the batteries are getting dead?
- Why do banks charge a fee for “insufficient funds” when they know there's not enough money?
- Why will someone believe you when you say there are four hundred billion stars, but check when you say the paint is wet?
- Why do they use sterilized needles for death by lethal injection?
- Why doesn't Tarzan have a beard?
- Why does Superman stop bullets with his chest, but ducks when you throw a revolver at him?
- Why did Kamikaze pilots wear helmets?
- Whose idea was it to put an “S” in the word “lisp?”
- If people evolved from apes, why are there still apes?
- Is there ever a day that mattresses are not on sale?
- Why do people return to the refrigerator with hopes that something new to eat will have materialized?
- How do those dead bugs get into enclosed light fixtures?
- In winter why do we try to keep the house as warm as it was in summer when we complained about the heat?
- How come you never hear father-in-law jokes?

ECLECTIC EATS HOST WANTED

Since Aaron Rabushka has moved to another group, we're looking for a new host for our monthly “Eclectic Eats” get-together. If you would enjoy meeting your fellow Mensans for an affordable, enjoyable dinner and lively conversation, if you appreciate introducing friends to a variety of food styles, this is the job for you! Contact Rose Berkowitz for more information, and let's get the ball rolling. Bon appetit!

Thank you, Aaron, for being such a wonderful host. We wish you all the best.

CHALLENGES TO FIGHT THE MID-WINTER BLAHS

By Kathe Oliver

At this time of year, many people develop the “Mid-Winter Blahs”. They complain that their lives are too predictable, and go looking for new challenges. Sometimes winter sports such as sledding, skiing, and curling are enough to defeat the blahs, but often people want a more intellectual challenge as well.

Here are a few competitions and contests for Young Mensans who are looking for a good challenge. Some are individual activities, one of which takes no more than a minute a day. Others are more complex and time consuming. None of the group activities require school sponsorship.

CultureQuest® : The Next Generation

American Mensa’s largest annual competition is CultureQuest® (CQ). Begun as a contest between two Local Groups in 1990, it now involves dozens of teams from across the United States and Canada competing for prizes and bragging rights. Their challenge is to see how many questions related to cultural literacy they can answer correctly in ninety minutes. Since CQ began, Mensans have answered over 3,000 questions covering topics in politics, history, the arts and sciences, and everything else that goes into being culturally literate.

CultureQuest® : The Next Generation teams joined the fun in 1999. Unlike teams in the original competition (now known as CultureQuest® : Classic), only the captains of Next Generation teams must be current Mensa members. However, team membership is age limited. This year’s Next Generation players must have been born after April 29, 1994.

Now is the time for Young Mensans to put together CultureQuest® teams. Team registration forms must be RECEIVED by the American Mensa National Office no later than March 31, 2012. The competition will be held on April 29. Complete information about CultureQuest® XXIII is available at <http://www.us.mensa.org/attend/culturequest/>.

CultureQuest® -ion of the Day

CultureQuest® team members are encouraged to read the CultureQuest®-ion of the Day, but you don’t have to compete in CultureQuest® to enjoy receiving a daily CultureQuest®-ion. If cultural literacy (or trivia) interests you, sign up! You’ll receive an e-mailed question to challenge you **every day. Each one is accompanied by the answer to the previous question. It’s a great way for Mensans of all ages to challenge their memory and knowledge. To sign up, go to** <http://www.us.mensa.org/AML/?LinkServID=F7E4FBB9-ADC5-472D-8B67E0BF25A9872D>.

Excellence in Reading Award Program

Most Mensans are voracious readers. Sometimes even Young Mensans start to think that they have read so many books that they have run out of ideas on what to read. If you are looking for good books to read, consider participating in the Mensa For Kids Excellence in Reading Award Program. Using book lists developed by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Mensa Foundation is sponsoring a reading challenge based on reading level, not the age or grade of the reader. Participants will be introduced to wonderful books, and earn certificates and t-shirts as well. For more information, visit Mensa for Kids at <http://mensaforkids.com/>.

Google Science Fair

Elementary school science fairs are still common, but finances have recently forced many state and regional science fairs for older students to close. In response to such closures, last year Google stepped forward to sponsor an online science fair allowing young scientists to show and share their work.

The second annual Google Science Fair will accept submissions between January 12 and March 30, 2012. It is open to scientists between the ages of thirteen and eighteen. Information about the science fair is available at <http://bit.ly/g7k2hM>.

World War II Photo Contest

Young photographers can compete in the “My Town Remembers World War II Photo Contest”. This contest gives photographers the opportunity to contribute to the National World War II Museum’s online exhibit “My Town Remembers WWII: A Collection of Memories”, an exhibit showing how communities continue to honor their contributions to World War II. Photo submissions will be added to the Museum’s interactive map of WWII “memory sites”. Each month one picture will be featured on the Museum’s website, and its photographer will receive a prize.

Pictures may show World War II memorials, statues, ceremonies, or even street signs. Each photograph must be accompanied by a short description (under 100 words) of what it shows and why it is significant. To learn more about this competition for student photographers, go to <http://bit.ly/AAUYvE>.

“Challenges to Fight the Mid-Winter Blahs” may be reprinted without alteration by any AML local group, with notification to Kathe Oliver at k.oliver@pobox.com.

“Challenges to Fight the Mid-Winter Blahs” was adapted from an article written for the February 2011 edition of Omen: The Magazine of Oregon Mensa.

TALK ABOUT IT!

Reprinted from American Mensa’s “Marketing Sparks” Newsletter

Here are some ideas and events your group may use to promote their chapters:

- Mind Games® happens in Washington, D.C. this April 20-22. This is an annual event where Mensans get together to play and rate the latest board and card games. It is also a competition for all the games manufacturers to earn the coveted Mensa Select Seal®. Even if you are not in the D.C. area, you can give this event a local twist. Are there gamers in your group? Interview them and feature them in your newsletters. Have your PR Coordinator pitch their story to your local media outlets. Then, tie it all back to the national event in Washington, D.C.. Find other game-centric outlets such as blogs or even the good ol’ comic book store and let them know about this event as well. Present this as one of the benefits of being involved with Mensa. This fun topic provides an opportunity to connect with the media and your community about your chapter which helps increase visibility. This visibility can help with recruitment efforts.
- Another fun topic you can talk about is CultureQuest®. This event happens April 29 and involves Mensans across the country and Canada. If you have a team that is competing, talk about it! Let your community know about this event and present it as yet another member benefit. Visit www.us.mensa.org/culturequest for more details.

- Spring is a good time for community festivals and fairs. Go to Materials Request at www.us.mensa.org/materials and reserve the table top display, request some recruiting cards, brochures, and pass-along versions of the *Mensa Bulletin* and get in front of your community. Let them know what Mensa is all about and why they should join.
- Many cities have websites featuring their local festivals. You can find a small list of state fairs and their sites by visiting www.us.mensa.org/sharehouse.
- The Annual Gathering happens July 4 -8th in Reno, Nev. Find out who in your group is attending, and see if they are willing to create a digital “scrapbook” or PowerPoint presentation to share. Either they can bring back photos and stories, or, for those who are really into up-to-the-minute social media, ask them to tweet on Twitter or post on Facebook. Then, post those tweets and Facebook updates on your group’s site. We know not everyone can make it to the AG, but this way you can bring the fun home to your Local Group, as well as share it with prospects as another benefit of joining.
- Make plans to talk with your local universities and colleges about participating in their “Back to School” fairs. This is a good place to have a table with information about testing and joining, as well

as scholarships and job networking opportunities for students.

- Feature a mini-quiz and follow-up with the high-scorers with an invitation to test. See the www.us.mensa.org/sharehouse for more details. Look for the file marked, "How to Attend a College Campus Fair as an Organization." Make sure you are scouting your neighborhood for locations and

strategizing promotional tactics for Mensa Testing Day in October. It's never too early to plan!

[NOTE: *These are all great ideas. I'm reprinting this here in hopes that some of our officers and members will be inspired to try some of them. Note that the sharehouse links mentioned above are only available to officers.— Editor*]



LSM KIDS' OUTING TO GREEN GATE FARMS

Submitted by Michele Welti Vaughan, LSM Gifted Children's Coordinator

Lone Star Mensa will be hosting a family-friendly gathering at Green Gate Farms in Southern Austin (near the Travis County Expo Center off of Decker Lane) on March 31 at noon. For more information about this historic farm, you may visit their web site at www.greengatefarms.net. The farm tour will begin at noon, so please arrive a few minutes early to purchase your tour ticket. The cost is \$5 per person, payable directly to the farm. The farm stand will also be open from 10 am-2pm if you are interested in purchasing some of their delicious organic produce.

After touring the farm, stay awhile and enjoy the company of other Mensan families amidst the urban farm setting. Bring a blanket and a picnic lunch. Feel free to bring a board game to share, some art supplies if the outdoors inspires you, or a book if you prefer to relax and read. We will be inviting some other gifted kids in the Austin area and hope to meet many of you there. As always, we're happy for you to bring your friends along too. Mensans without children are welcome to attend as well; the more the merrier.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Michele Vaughan at lonestar.gifted.children@gmail.com. My cell number on the day of the event will be: (512) 699-0689. For any questions about the farm itself, contact them directly at (512) 484-2746. You may also wish to join the "Lone Star Mensa" group on Facebook for any event updates after this newsletter has gone to press.

Life on a farm is a school of patience;
you can't hurry the crops or make an ox in two days.

– Henri Alain

LONE STAR MENSA CONTACTS BY FUNCTION

As of January 10, 2012

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		--Vacant--	
Monthly Programs		--Vacant--	
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* Experienced members who've worked with the National Office (NO) and the American Mensa Committee (AMC), and can help members navigate both.

MARCH CALENDAR

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8 ALG Deadline Chess Night, TGIT-North	9	10
11	12 Member Meeting	13	14	15 TGIT-South	16	17 
18	19	20	21	22 TGIT-North Seal & Label	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31 Gifted Kids Outing

See the online calendar (www.lsm.us.mensa.org/events/calendar.html) for the latest additions, cancellations, or changes. Online calendar inputs may be posted at any time. Calendar input for the printed calendar is due by the second Thursday of each month for the following month's calendar.

Mensa Admissions Testing

?????

For time, location, and details contact Austin Meyer at 971-3123 or austin.g.meyer@gmail.com.

ALG/Calendar Deadline

2nd Thursday

Mar. 8, Midnight

Submissions due.

Chess Night (with the TGIT group)

2nd Thursday

Mar. 8, 6-8 PM

Central Market Café North
Bring your chess sets if you have them. Hosted by Douglas Yee. See the TGIT North entry for directions.

Thank Goodness It's Thursday (North)

2nd & 4th Thursdays

Mar. 8 & 22, 6:00-8:00 PM

Central Market Café North at Central Park:

4001 N. Lamar Blvd., Austin
512-206-1020

East of N. Lamar between 38th and 44th Streets; on the south side of the store.

Meet us at the Café for conversation, food and fun.

Prospective members welcome.

Look for the Mensa table sign.

Member Meeting

2nd Monday

Mar. 12, 6:15-8:45 PM

Carver Public Library, Rooms 2-3

1161 Angelina, Austin

512-974-1010

Between 11th and 12th Streets, east of *HIGHWAY I-35*. This location allows direct access to the library from *Highway 183* and via FM 969 MLK and 12th Street.

Thank Goodness It's Thursday (South)

3rd Thursdays

Mar. 15, 6:00-8:00 PM

Central Market Café South at Westgate Mall:

4477 S. Lamar Blvd., Austin
512-899-4300

On the south side of the S. Lamar access road (the south access road of I-290/SR71) between Westgate Blvd. and Frontier Trail. Enter on the east side of the store, by the statues of fruits and vegetables.

Come join the South Austin group for conversation, food and fun. Prospective members welcome.

Seal & Label

4th Thursday

Mar. 22, 6:00-8:00 PM

Central Market Café North

4001 N. Lamar Blvd., Austin

512-206-1020

Join the TGIT Group to help seal and label the newsletter. See the TGIT-North entry for directions.

LSM Gifted Kids Outing

Saturday, March 31, noon-?

Green Gate Farms

www.greengatefarms.net

512-484-2746

In Southern Austin (near the Travis County Expo Center off of Decker Lane). Contact Michelle Vaughn at lonestar.gifted.children@gmail.com or 512-699-0689 for details.

UPCOMING IN APRIL

Apr. 4 Board Meeting

Apr. 9, Member Meeting

Apr. 12, Chess Night, ALG Deadline

Apr. 12 & 26, TGIT-North

Apr. 19, TGIT-South

Apr. 26, Seal & Label

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Submission Information: Submissions of all types are encouraged. The deadline is the 2nd Thursday of each month. Submissions may be by email or by snail mail in typed format. Anonymous submissions are not accepted, although the author's identity may be withheld upon request. The editor reserves the right to edit for clarity and length. Items in this newsletter may be reprinted in other Mensa publications, with credit given, except for those works restricted by the author.

Advertising Rates and Policies:

Non-commercial: Lone Star Mensa members may submit 2 per year at no charge. 4 line maximum, subject to editor's discretion as to date of publication.

Commercial: Business card sized ads (2" x 3") are \$10 for one month, \$25 for three months, and \$40 for six months. Publication may be delayed due to space considerations. Ads must be camera ready, accurately sized, and should be submitted electronically in Word (preferred), JPG or PDF format. We reserve the right to edit for content if necessary. Rates for other sized ads or other time periods are available upon request. The deadline for ad submission to the newsletter editor is 5 days before the general newsletter deadline.

Calendar: See the online calendar for the latest additions, cancellations, or changes to calendar items. Online calendar inputs may be submitted at any time. Inputs for the printed calendar are due to calendar@lsm.us.mensa.org by the second Thursday of each month for the next month's calendar.



Armadillo Literary Gazette

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