

Region 1 Roundup
by Ian Randal Strock
Region 1 RVC
(written 29 August 2019)

In August, I got to visit three groups around the Region. On the 4th, I made it to Boston Mensa's New Member Party/Annual Picnic (and ExComm meeting). The next weekend, it was Northern New Jersey Mensa's Annual Picnic (and ExComm meeting). Then I took a weekend outside the Region, for Metropolitan Washington Mensa's RG (where I participated in a panel discussion about the AMC with four other AMC members). And on the 25th, I got to Southern Connecticut Mensa's Annual Picnic (rescheduled due to bad weather the weekend before). I had a great time seeing people who don't often travel beyond the confines of their home groups. And at each of the picnics, I was pleased to see several younger members: they are our future, so I hope we can continue to come up with activities that will keep them interested in Mensa. The thing most likely to keep them returning is interacting with others close to their age, so I'll echo what I said a couple of months ago: please do try to plan some family events, to draw out both younger members and children of members.

Recently, I had interactions with two members which have stuck with me. In one case, a local volunteer was grumbling about not getting paid for the work she performs on behalf of Mensa. In the other, a member was grumbling about officers being reimbursed for expenses incurred while taking care of Mensa business. These two conversations have stuck with me, because they're two sides of the same coin. I've been a member of Mensa for a long time, and during those years, both the organization we're part of and the world in which it operates have changed. Attitudes and expectations have changed. People do things differently, see things differently, interact differently. But through all those changes, I think I'm safe in saying that Mensa only exists because the members value it enough to do all the volunteer work Mensa needs to keep on existing. Every local group, every event, every newsletter, every member interaction: all of these things are coordinated, operated, planned, executed, publicized, staffed, and organized solely by members just like you, who get paid nothing for their efforts, who expect no pay, and who know that they're sacrificing time and effort they could be putting elsewhere to actually earn themselves money. They do it because they want these things to occur.

Mensa does have a paid staff in our national office, but it's a staff we try to keep as small as possible, to handle the actual business needs of a national organization with 50,000 members. The more tasks we assign to the office, the more we have to pay for an office (and the more we will each have to pay in dues). But as we turn over more responsibility to the office, Mensa becomes less our society, and more like just another service we pay for, interchangeable with any other paid service like a cruise, a restaurant meal, or a theatre performance. What has always made Mensa special is not that we sit back and watch it to be entertained, but that we participate in it to make the experience mean something to us and each other.

At the Annual Gathering, during the local group leader luncheon, we discussed volunteers: how to find, nurture, support, and recognize them. And it occurred to me that, though I may have said something in an email, the volunteers in Region 1 are incredible, and deserve your notice, too. So

please turn to the staff box in this issue of your newsletter. Every issue, it lists your group's elected and appointed officers and coordinators, volunteers all, members just like you who've decided to give freely of their time and efforts in order for Mensa to continue to thrive, in order to bring you this newsletter, and every local, regional, and national event you've participated in (as well as those you've read about, but haven't yet tried for yourself). I was originally going to list them all in this column, but then I realized just how many people that is, in our Region of twelve groups and six thousand members, and realized this column would run on three times longer than usual.

So whether you put in an occasional hour every other month, or you're working 15–20 hours per week for Mensa, let me just say, to all of the Mensa volunteers: thank you! Your efforts are vital to Mensa, and even if we don't say it often enough, we do appreciate you.

To celebrate the work of all those volunteers, take a look not only at your local group's newsletter, but those of your surrounding local groups. Remember that their newsletters (and calendars) are available to you on the Mensa web site (from the main us.mensa.org web site, pull down the "Read" tab and click on "Local Group newsletters"). And I urge you to share your events with those surrounding groups' calendar editors. Keep up to date with the latest goings on in the region in Region 1's Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/188180494045/>

Upcoming Region 1 Regional Gatherings:

Boston Mensa's Wicked Good RG: (October 25–27, 2019) in Fitchburg, Massachusetts. For more info, see <https://rg.bostonmensa.org/>

New Hampshire Mensa's RG at the End of the Universe: (February 14–16, 2020) in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. For more info, see <https://nhmensa.org/rgnews.php>

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Glossary:

AMC: American Mensa Committee, the national board of directors

RVC: Regional Vice Chairman, a member of the AMC with responsibility for a specific region of American Mensa

Region 1: The northeast region of American Mensa, comprising New England, Northern New Jersey, and most of New York

AG: American Mensa's once-a-year five-day Annual Gathering, featuring the Annual Business Meeting, more than a hundred speakers, and more than a thousand Mensans.

RG: Regional Gathering: a weekend-long get-together hosted by a local group featuring speakers, games, events, and more with 100–400 of your closest friends you haven't met yet.

ExComm: Executive Committee, in some groups known as Board of Directors: the members who have volunteered and been elected to take care of the day-to-day business of operation of a local group. The local group version of the AMC.

LocSec: Local Secretary, aka president: the elected leader of a local group (the name comes from

our British roots)

SIGHT: the Service of Information, Guidance and Hospitality to Travelers
(<https://www.us.mensa.org/connect/sight/>)

YM: Young Mensan: teenaged members and those younger

YAM: Young Adult Mensan: members in their 20s and 30s