

Region 1 Roundup
by Ian Randal Strock
Region 1 RVC
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September started, for me, in Albany, at Mensa of Northeastern New York's RechaRGe Regional Gathering. As in past years, the hotel is not an attractant. But the concentration of Mensans and a convivial atmosphere more than makes up for the surroundings. And as a four-day RG (over the Labor Day weekend), I always find this to be one of the best, because as Saturday is winding down, and I'm feeling the joy of having experienced a full day of RG, I'm not thinking about packing and leaving; I know there's another full day right ahead of me. I urge you to make the most of your membership by interacting with as many other Mensans as you can, and remind you again that Regional Gatherings are a great way to do it.

After coming home from RechaRGe, I had three days in Brooklyn before I was on the road again, to Texas, for the quarterly AMC meeting. The agenda was light on "business" (other than updating our investment fund policy). However, the September meeting is also our planning meeting, figuring out our goals and foci for the coming year and multi-year period. That was a much more intensive day of work.

One of the goals we talked about was increasing the number of members of American Mensa, and for that, the local group is key. For most members, other than the welcome letter when they join, their first contact with Mensa is through the local group: receiving this newsletter, and attending your local events. So it's up to us, individually and collectively, to make sure those new members encounter an organization in which they want to maintain their membership and increase their participation. Think about the first event you attended, and how difficult it was to break into the conversation. Heck, think about how difficult it was just to walk in the door. And then, seeing no one like you, you probably wanted to turn around and leave. But someone made you feel welcome, something about that event, those people, encouraged you to try again, and again, and now look where you are. Please keep those feelings in mind the next time you attend an event: every one is some member's first. And that someone may be your new best friend, if only you'll turn aside from the really intense conversation you're having—for just a moment—to say hi to someone new.

Along those lines, our greatest source of new members is people who want to take the Mensa test. And testing is, by and large, a local issue. Local groups are testing less often, making it harder for people who want to join us to do so. Even if you're not a local testing coordinator or proctor, look around. Maybe you can find a welcoming room we can use to offer the test. Or take the plunge, learn how to be a proctor, join the cadre, and maybe you can be the first Mensan someone meets when they take the test.

We're also hopeful that electronic testing, at dedicated testing centers, will be coming online in the next few months, which should be a big help in this area. But those testing centers are cold, nearly automated. The live person welcoming a test-taker will still be very important to Mensa. A lot of what I say, what I suggest, boils down to the view I've had of Mensa for a long time: it's

a do-it-yourself organization. Don't see an event you want to attend in the calendar? Plan it, send a write-up to your editor, and voila! The event will exist. Don't like the way things are being run? Offer to do it yourself. All local groups (and the national organization) are very eager for new volunteers in all capacities, and the volunteers who are there will be happy to help you along. If you're having trouble finding the right contact to help you out, contact me, and I'll put you in touch. (Or, even easier, visit Mensa Connect (connect.us.mensa.org), log in, and click on "volunteer.") And the simplest: are you not getting enough of what you want out of your membership? Step out the door, pick up the phone, send an email, tell someone. No one knows what you want until you tell us.

Remember, if you're looking for great things to do with Mensans, and you don't see the right one in your local group's newsletter, check out those of your surrounding local groups. 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>

—Ian Randal Strock
917-755-6935
RVC1@us.mensa.org

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