

Welcome Letter 2014

Greater Los Angeles Area Mensa Regional Gathering

Welcome to GLAAM StaRGazing 2014, taking place February 14-17, 2014 in Woodland Hills CA. We have a huge selection of speakers and activities this year. Go to: www.glaam.us.mensa.org/rg/2014 for the schedule and lists of speakers, games and events.

If you have any questions, Co-Chairs Desiree Sagray and Madeline Walker, or any other committee member, are there to help you. Ask for Desiree or Madeline at the Registration Table – they will be able to find us.

To get the most out of your experience, please take every opportunity to walk up to another RG attendee and introduce yourself! Volunteering is a great way to meet people, too.

ATTENTION!

Several of our speakers will have their books available for sale and for signing. Please bring cash for the pleasure of purchasing these items.

Special Marriott Hotel *Sunday Champagne Brunch Buffet* (\$50 per person at the door, or 10% discount if prepaid). Buffet will include: Smoked Nova Scotia Salmon, New York Steak, Pasta with Bay Shrimps and Scallops, Scrambled Eggs with Three Cheese Blend, Cinnamon French Toast, Presentation of Cheeses, Muffins, Bagels and Flavored Cream Cheeses, Yogurts served with Homemade Granola, and more. Special entertainment will be provided. Note: only attendees registered for the Sunday Brunch will be admitted for the Sunday morning entertainment.

Bring Poems, Jokes, or other short Readings for OPEN MIKE at the Beatnik Coffeehouse on Friday evening. Alan Stillson will keep the music going, and in between songs we will welcome anyone who wants to share their favorite Expression Art.

Bring books and other media for the Media Exchange Table!

If you have friends who have thought about taking the Mensa test, the RG Sunday morning is a good time. If they preregister and attend to take the Mensa test, they can stay at the RG all day Sunday. See details below.

Bring a smile and a willingness to say “Hi!” to a stranger who looks like they could use a friendly greeting. You can be an ambassador to new attendees – even if you are new yourself!

Location:

Warner Center Marriott - Woodland Hills
21850 Oxnard Street (Second Floor)
Woodland Hills, California 91367
(818) 887-4800

Driving Directions:

Take the 101 Freeway West, go about 6 miles past the 405 Freeway. Exit Topanga Blvd North. Go about ½ mile, turn right onto Oxnard Street. Go about 500 feet. The hotel is on the right-hand side. You can drive back to the parking structure, or there is a small amount of street parking.

JAMZILLA WARNING!

There will be construction at night in the Sepulveda Pass on the 405 Freeway to add carpool lanes:

- Friday, Feb. 14: 1 a.m. to 6 a.m.
- Saturday, Feb. 15: 2 a.m. to 7 a.m.
- Sunday, Feb. 16: 12 a.m. to 5 a.m.
- Monday, Feb. 17: 12 a.m. to 5 a.m.

Southbound lanes and two Northbound lanes will be open during the day. Plan your travel time and route accordingly.

Other Transportation:

The Warner Center Marriott does not provide shuttle service to airports or other destinations.

From LAX to the Warner Center Marriott: “Shuttle 2 LAX” goes between LAX and Woodland Hills. Arrange tickets at <http://shuttletolax.com/> First person \$20, \$11 for each person with them, each way.

Other Shuttle services to and from LAX or Burbank/Bob Hope Airport include:

<http://www.supershuttle.com> - Super Shuttle

<http://primetimeshuttle.com> - Prime Time Shuttle

<http://www.rrshuttle.com> - Roadrunner Shuttle

<https://goairportshuttle.com> - Go Airport Shuttle

Public Transit: Take the Metro Orange Line rapid bus to its western terminus at Warner Center. You are now about 1.5 blocks from the hotel! The Orange Line runs from early morning until about midnight – check schedules first to ensure you make your connections. Get directions at <http://www.metro.net/> .

Hotel Reservations:

Register for your luxurious hotel room through the Warner Center Marriott (818-887-4800) or:

<http://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/laxwc-warner-center-marriott-woodland-hills/?toDate=2/17/14&groupCode=menmena&fromDate=2/14/14&app=resvlink> .

The GLAAM RG room rate has expired, but there’s no harm in asking for a good rate anyway.

Wireless High Speed Internet is free only in the public lobby areas, and available in the guestrooms for a fee.

On-Site RG Registration and Check-in Times:

Friday 3:00 – 9:00 pm

Saturday 8:30 am – 12:30 pm & 1:45-4:00 pm

Sunday 9:00 am – 10:30 am & 12:00-3:00 pm

Pick up your badge, schedule, and other information at the Registration Desk in the hallway on the second floor. Sign-ups for tastings and other activities will be available there. The Hospitality Room will be open 24 hours a day, from 4:00 pm Friday until the Food Sale at 10:00 am Monday. The Game Room will have a schedule posted. We have programs until late on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, including “StaRGazing After Hours” in the Ventura I/II room each evening.

Dots and Stars on the Badges:

Colored stars and other stickers on the badge indicate Registration Codes, Tastings, or other events for which you have Registered. There will be a special sticker designated as Vegetarian which will help Hospitality direct you to the appropriate dishes during meal times.

Hug dots are available for attendees to place on their badges. Green indicates “Accepts and gives hugs”, Yellow indicates “Ask first” and Red indicates “Please respect my personal space.” The definition of Blue Dots changes from moment to moment.

RG Registration Rates:

To register onsite, please bring cash or check. We do not take credit cards onsite. Registration costs after January 21st and at the door:

- Full registration - \$139
- Two-day registration - Fri/Sat : \$75 or Sun/Mon: \$69
- Half-price RG registration for ages 17 and under
- Sunday Kids' Track is \$30 per child (see below for more info)

Activities at the RG that Require Extra Fees:

- Marriott Hotel Sunday Brunch Buffet \$50 (10% off for Brunch preregistration)
- Pub Crawl (\$5 for van, plus cost of drinks)
- Tour to California Science Center for Endeavour Space Shuttle and IMAX movie (\$12 per person). When this tour fills, we will add names to a wait list. On the morning of the tour, meet at the van to find out if there is a space for you. If you are not offered a space, your payment will be returned to you.
- Tastings (See Tastings section)
- Mensa Testing (See Mensa Testing section – must be pre-reserved)
- Any offsite meals, including at restaurants in the Marriott
- Parking Fees in the Parking structure or other places
- Any books or products sold by speakers
- Any tips for hotel staff

Speakers/Programs:

At most times we will have two or three speakers presenting, plus games, tastings, and other activities. Please fill out comment forms for each speaker to help us with future planning. To find out about the speakers, go to www.glaam.us.mensa.org/rg/2014/speakers.php, or check your schedule booklet when you arrive.

Programs are subject to change, even after the program book has been printed! Please check with the Registration Desk for the most up-to-date schedule. We will try to start all events on time. We have a full schedule. Please be seated at the activity of your choice before the start time.

Hospitality/Meals/Beverages:

Hospitality meals and snacks will be in the Calabasas Room. When not being used for another program, the Ventura III Room across the hallway will serve as overflow seating for Hospitality.

Meals included in the registration fee include Friday dinner; Saturday breakfast, lunch and dinner; and Sunday dinner. Because Brunch will be available on Sunday morning, only light snacks will be available in the Calabasas Room on Sunday until dinner. Monday breakfast will be whatever is still available. Breakfasts will be Continental (i.e. coffee, milk, juice, bagels, schmeer, muffins, bread, fruit), with the possible additions of hardboiled eggs and oatmeal. Friday dinner will be pizza and salad. Saturday lunch will be meat-and-cheese deli sandwiches. Saturday and Sunday dinners will be food catered by nearby restaurants. Coffee, decaf and tea will be available at or shortly after all meals.

Beverages (sodas, water), peanut butter and jelly, bread, fruit, some fresh veggies, and sweet and salty snacks will be available round-the-clock in Hospitality. Filtered water will be available in the conference area.

Please keep all food and drink, except water, in the Hospitality room, the Hospitality overflow room (Ventura III Room), and the StaRGazers' Lounge. This is required by our contract with the hotel.

Vegetarian items will be available at all meals. Contact Desiree at dezlaw@aol.com before Thursday, February 13th, with any questions about vegetarian dining or other dietary restrictions. Please come to the front of the line at each meal so we can meet your dietary needs. If you don't see an item, ask.

Tastings:

The RG proudly offers two low-fee member-selected tastings. Sign up early to guarantee a spot. Sign-ups will be available at the Registration Desk.

- \$12 Cheese Tasting I - Aged Cheese (Saturday 3:30)
- \$10 Cheese Tasting II - Comparative Fromage (Sunday 3:00)

The Tea Tasting that was scheduled had to be cancelled. Registration fees for it will be refunded.

StaRGazers' Lounge:

We are delighted to try a new experiment this year with late night RG activities! We have reimagined the StaRGazers Lounge of our past to be a smaller room on a higher floor where you can still find beer and wine available as part of your Registration expenses for free. However, the hours will be somewhat limited (depends on volunteer availability) and there will not be as much space for relaxation this year. (Please Note: You are welcome to take some of the beverages to another guest room, but any beer and wine taken cannot be brought to the second floor.)

Instead, we are transforming our main program room, Ventura I/II, into a more open and inviting environment each evening. We will have a cash bar available for cocktails on the main program floor in order to enhance your enjoyment of our evening entertainment, and we will be screening different movies each evening so that you can relax, hang out with friends, and enjoy being with your fellow M's.

What to Bring:

Dress for all programs is casual. As the conference rooms can be cool, bring a sweater or light jacket. The hotel has a pool and fitness center for use by hotel guests. Swim suits required. Bring items to place on the Media Exchange Table, and a bag to take home the treasures you find. Bring Poems, Jokes, or other Readings for the Beatnik Coffeehouse on Friday evening. Bring your own water bottle and coffee mug to cut down on waste from disposables.

Mensa Testing:

The Mensa admission test will be offered in the conference area from approximately 8:30-11:00 am Sunday morning. Sign up at least one week IN ADVANCE by contacting Dave Felt at <feltd@verizon.net> and include the words "MENSA EXAM" in the subject line, or leave a message at 626-355-8315. Dave will send you details. For more information, see <http://www.dfe.net/mensa.html> . Dave Felt or another proctor will supervise this test. If you have friends who have been thinking of taking the test, let them know - this would be a good time, since they get to attend the RG the rest of that day.

Because testing requires a quiet environment, only quiet programs are offered until 11:00 am Sunday.

How to Meet People:

The RG offers many opportunities for meeting people, including the New Member Reception, the RVC Rap Session, and the Pub Crawl.

More ways to meet people:

If you liked (or didn't like) a particular presentation, ask someone else what they thought of it.

If you see an empty seat at a lunch table, sit down and introduce yourself.

Hang out in the Game Room.

For easy interaction, go to a game where everyone participates.

Find a great opening line, like, "I haven't seen you at a GLAAM RG before!"

Volunteer at Registration, Hospitality, the Lounge, or to introduce Speakers.

Media Exchange:

Bring your unwanted media to the Media Exchange Table to swap with others: books, CDs, VHS tapes, etc. Please do NOT bring textbooks or moldy/smelly books. You do not have to bring something to take something. Leftovers will be donated to charity.

Annual Business Meeting:

GLAAM is required by our Bylaws to conduct an Annual Business Meeting (ABM), and we typically hold it on the Monday morning of the RG. This is an opportunity for the Board Members to present annual reports to the membership and allow the membership the opportunity to ask questions of the Board Members regarding the past year. Please note that this event is for GLAAM members only. The submitted Minutes from last year will be available on the website prior to the meeting.

This meeting is also open to GLAAM members who did not register for the RG.

Volunteers:

Volunteers are always welcome. Please contribute just one or two hours: Help out in Hospitality, greet and introduce speakers, or help break down on Monday morning. Sign up at Registration. The RG is conceived, created and run entirely by volunteers. You will earn the committee's undying gratitude for helping out, and have a great chance to meet new people.

Pub Crawl:

The chauffeured Pub Crawl Friday night is only \$5 (for the van) plus the cost of your drinks. Visit neighborhood pubs selected by discriminating Mensans and crawl back to the hotel in the wee hours of Saturday morning. The Pub Crawl van will depart Friday evening from the hotel front lobby.

The Pub Crawl is preceded by the New Member Reception as well as other programs.

Van Tour to the California Science Center, IMAX and Space Shuttle Endeavour:

Our van will take a group to the California Science Center (\$12 fee per person) to see the Space Shuttle Endeavour, an IMAX movie, and, as time allows, the California Science Center. If this tour is already full, you may pay the fee to be wait-listed. On Saturday morning at 8:00 am, come to the van parking area at the front of the Marriott. Madeline will be there in her red hat with the yellow M on it. If there are spaces, you will be put in the van in order of payment received. If you are in the waiting area and do not receive a seat, we will refund your payment to you.

Game Room:

Games in the game room either belong to GLAAM or are someone's personal property, donated for the duration of the RG. Please treat the games gently and return all pieces to the box. The game room will be open most of the time. See schedule posted outside the Game Room. On Sunday morning, please keep the noise down so the people taking the Mensa test will not be distracted.

Games (see Program for schedule):

Lawyer Games: Discuss and solve lateral thinking puzzles. Each mystery is stated in a couple minutes. The host can only answer "Yes" or "No" to the questions that can lead to a solution.

Original Interactive Word Games by puzzle master Alan Stillson.

Werewolves and Villagers: Lie about your identity, accuse other players of being a Werewolf, and figuratively kill other players! Minimum 8 players, ages 9 and up. Arrive on time to hear the rules. Quiet observers are welcome.

Other Games may include: Apples to Apples, Big Bang Theory Trivia, What Were You Thinking, Taboo, Carnelli, Encore, Anomia, Chess, Scattergories, Monopoly, Carnelli, Name That Tune, and more. At any time a game of Backgammon, Boggle, Palabra, Scrabble, or Trivial Pursuit may break out when you least expect it.

Accessibility:

The hotel and the conference area are wheelchair-accessible. Service animals are permitted indoors for people with disabilities.

Sunday Kids' Track:

- Cost is \$30 per child, including entry for a parent or two. Children 12 and under must be accompanied by an adult; youth 13-17 must have an adult on premises and a cell phone number available.
- Kids' Track includes programs on Sunday from 11:00 am to 5:30 pm (see below).
- Hospitality snacks are included in the \$30 price for children and their parents attending Kids' Track. Dinner in Hospitality is available to families who stay past 5:30 pm.
- Kids who hold a full-event or a two-day Sun/Mon registration do not need to pay extra for Kids' Track activities. They are included in the RG registration price.
- Kids are welcome at all Mensa lectures and games unless otherwise notified. A few presentations may be labeled "Adults only", and parents are expected to use their judgment on other presentations with questionable titles.

Kids' Track Activities:

11:00-12:00 Meet at Red Robin restaurant, 6600 Topanga Canyon Blvd, Canoga Park 91303, on the East side of the Topanga Plaza. We will have a separate area to sit together. Ask for the Mensa group. Enjoy a late breakfast or early lunch if you want (no-host). We wish to encourage kids to sit with kids, and parents to sit with other parents. Meet, converse, and enjoy.

12:00-12:15 Drive South on Topanga Canyon Blvd. about a mile to Oxnard St., turn left/East. The hotel is a few driveways on the right. There is hotel self-parking and some street parking. The Registration Table is in the hallway on the second floor.

12:15-12:30 Kids' Track Orientation in the Game Room (Beverly Hills Room)

The Schedule has activities for younger kids (about 8 and under) and older kids (about 9 and up) and their adults. Crossover in ages is acceptable, except for "Werewolves and Villagers" which is for 9 and up only. Please remember that the games and activities are for everyone's enjoyment. Excessive rowdiness or horseplay will not be allowed.

Activities for Younger kids -

12:30-1:15 Imagination Tour of the Marriott.

1:30-2:30 Cookie/cupcake decorating with Johanna the Cookie Lady (for 8 and under)

3:00 - 4:00 Planetary Society: Light demonstration.

4:30-5:30 We might have Improv for Kids. If not, games are available in the Game Room.

Activities for Older kids -

12:30-1:15 "Who Am I?" will be led by Jay Friedlander

1:30-2:30 Lecture on Spacetime: Our Four-Dimensional World presented by Marshall Burns

3:00 - 4:00 "Lawyers Games" will be led by Joyce Hamilton

4:30-5:30 "Werewolves and Villagers" will be led by Aaron Mertz (for 9 and up)

As the last activity of the afternoon, this game may continue awhile.

Older kids may continue to use the Game Room depending on whether their parents are ready to go or not.

Parking:

Parking in the hotel structure is a \$6 day rate (regular hotel rate is \$13/day) or \$10.00 overnight rate with in-and-out privileges for attendees who are staying in the hotel. There is limited street parking available behind the hotel.

Restaurants:

Aside from the RG supplying most meals and around-the-clock snacks, the Warner Center Marriott has several restaurants, including Breeze, which offers breakfast, lunch and dinner, Q-Martini Bar with lunch and dinner, and Starbucks.

We have a special Sunday Brunch for \$50 (10% discount if reserved by 2/7/14). There will not be breakfast or lunch served Sunday in Hospitality. If you do not want to attend the Brunch, please enjoy your choice at any of the restaurants available in the hotel or nearby (no-host).

The hotel is near a large mall with many restaurants, and other restaurants are a short car drive away. A local map will be available at the Registration Desk.

Tipping:

Suggested tipping rates are: 15-20% of restaurant tabs, \$1-\$3 per bag to bellman/porter, \$1/round per drink, \$2-\$3 to housekeeper for each night of stay.

Photography:

The RG Committee may be taking photographs of the attendees for publicity/posting to the GLAAM website. Please let the photographer know if you do not wish to be photographed.

If you wish to take photos, ask permission of the people in the photograph first. Please do not take pictures of children at the RG unless it is restricted to your own child or you have permission from their parent/guardian.

Smoking:

The hotel interior is non-smoking. There are smoking areas outside.

Internet Access:

There is no Internet access in the conference area. The hotel offers free wireless in the main lobby area (including at the Starbucks). The hotel offers high-speed Internet access in the hotel rooms for a fee.

Food sale:

Sale of unused food items and paper goods will begin at approximately 10:00 am Monday in Hospitality. Please bring cash. If you are interested in anything in particular, please notify Hospitality Chair Desiree Sagray onsite as soon as possible. Great bargains!

2015 GLAAM RG:

We are now taking names for the 2015 GLAAM RG –

Volunteers for Planning Committee, Hospitality, Registration, Speaker Collectors, Speaker Shepherds, A/V coordinators, etc.

Names of potential Speakers on a large variety of topics for next year.

Names of attendees who had so much fun that they know they want to come back next year!

Count on being at the GLAAM StaRGazers' RG February 13-16, 2015!