

Welcome Letter 2015

Greater Los Angeles Area Mensa

Regional Gathering

Welcome to GLAAM StaRGazing 2015, taking place February 13-16, 2015 next to Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). We have a huge selection of speakers and activities this year. Go to: www.glaam.us.mensa.org/rg/2015/index.php for the Schedule and lists of Speakers and Events.

If you have any questions at the RG, Co-Chairs Jay Friedlander and Madeline Walker, or any other committee member, are there to help you. Ask for Jay or Madeline at the Registration Table.

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 or CDs available for sale and for signing. Please bring cash for the pleasure of purchasing these items.

Special *Sunday Champagne Brunch Buffet* (\$39 per person must be paid by Saturday noon, or add to your pre-registration). Buffet will include fluffy scrambled eggs, scrambled egg whites with spinach and mushroom, grilled honey-baked ham, crispy bacon, turkey sausage, home-style potatoes, fresh fruit, sliced tomatoes, cold cereals with 2% and whole milk (soy, almond or rice milk also provided), chilled juices, assorted breakfast pastries, breads and donuts, Starbucks® regular & decaf coffee and herbal teas. 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 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 know people who have thought about taking the Mensa test, RG Sunday morning is a good time. They must preregister. If they attend 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: The Concourse Hotel at LAX
6225 W. Century Blvd. at Sepulveda (Second Floor)
Los Angeles, California 90045
(402) 537-6838

Driving Directions:

Take the 405 Freeway to Century Blvd going west. When the left lanes go uphill curving left, stay in the right lane below. The hotel is ahead on the right. Drive to the QuikPark parking structure in back for self-parking, or there is a small amount of street parking.

Attention about Shuttle Service and Parking:

The Concourse Hotel provides shuttle service to and from LAX via vans from the QuickPark parking structure behind the Concourse. The shuttle is a Purple Van which is labeled “Concourse Hotel” above the front window and “QuickPark” on the side. Note: Read QuickPark’s FAQ’s, and the first few “Comments” about calling in and flagging down the shuttle.

Self-Parking at QuickPark for the Concourse Hotel is \$15 per night. Valet is \$20.

For a discount, check this site to pre-order discounted parking coupons at the QuickPark Indoor Self-park: www.cheapairportparking.org As of this printing, these coupons cost much less for self-parking.

Other Transportation for Southern California residents:

Shuttle services to and from LAX include:

<http://shuttletolax.com> – Shuttle 2 LAX

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

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

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

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

Ask if they will drop you at The Concourse Hotel, or take the QuickPark shuttle from the airport to the hotel.

Public Transit:

Get directions at <http://www.metro.net/> to the Metro “LAX City Bus Center”. Walk a block west to Vickburg St., turn left. Walk a block south, cross street, go past the parking structure, and turn right to go in the back door of the hotel. About ¼ mile walk. Or -

Take the Metro Green Line to the Aviation Station. The “G” shuttle is free to LAX with Green Line ticket. Then find the QuickPark Concourse Hotel Shuttle. Or –

From the Green Line Aviation Station, find a bus going North on Sepulveda, and ask if they drop you near the NE corner of Sepulveda and Century, or if they go to the “LAX City Bus Center”.

Hotel Reservations:

Register for your luxurious hotel room through The Concourse Hotel (402-537-6838) and mention Greater Los Angeles Area Mensa. The GLAAM RG \$99 room rate will expire after January 31. The guestrooms have free WIFI and 42-inch flat screen televisions.

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, and 6:45-7:45 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 through the double doors near the top of the stairs on the second floor (Take the elevator!). 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. We have programs until late on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, including “StaRGazing After Hours” in the Catalina room.

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. A credit card system will be available. Any credit charges will be at +5%. Registration costs after January 31st and at the door:

- Full registration - \$139
- Two-day registration - Fri/Sat : \$85 or Sun/Mon: \$75
- Half-price RG registration for ages 17 and under
- Sunday Kids' Track is \$35 for the first child, \$25 for siblings (see below for more info)

Activities at the RG that Require Extra Fees:

- Sunday Brunch Buffet \$39 per person, must be reserved by Saturday at noon.
- Pub Crawl - \$5 for van, plus cost of drinks
- Tour to Getty Center - \$5 for van. Limited seating available. See "Van Tour" below for instructions on seating and wait listing.
- Tastings - See Tastings section
- Mensa Testing - See Mensa Testing section – must be pre-reserved
- Any offsite meals, including at restaurants in the Concourse
- Parking Fees in the Parking structure or other places
- Any books, CD's or other 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/2015/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 located beyond the Catalina program room.

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 Hospitality Room on Sunday until dinner. Monday breakfast will be whatever is still available.

Breakfasts will be Continental. Friday dinner will be pizza and salad. Saturday lunch will be deli sandwiches. Saturday and Sunday dinners will be 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 in Hospitality. Drinking water will be available in the conference areas.

Vegetarian items will be available at all meals. Contact Lee Stillman at leestillman@sbcglobal.net before Thursday, February 12th, with any questions about vegetarian dining or other dietary restrictions.

Vegetarians, please come to the front of the line at the beginning of each meal so we can meet your dietary needs.

If you don't see an item, ask.

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

Tastings:

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

- \$9 International Dessert Tasting
- \$10 Cheese Tasting
- \$12 Alcohol Tasting – The Cheap Stuff – High Quality, Low Price

StaRGazers' Lounge:

The 2015 StaRGazers' Lounge is truly spectacular! Held in the "Presidents' Suite", there is plush furniture, a kitchenette, and a sauna that can hold a few people.

Beer, wine, and soft drinks will be available as part of your Registration fee. The hours will depend on volunteer availability. If you want the Lounge to be open, sign up to monitor the room. The Lounge Monitor will be responsible for minor set-up and clean-up, keeping the noise to a reasonable level so as to not keep the entire hotel awake, and keeping one eye on the safety of our guests. Beyond that, you get to relax, chat, and enjoy the atmosphere.

Volunteers:

Volunteers are always welcome. Please contribute. Even one or two hours is a tremendous help to us. Greet and introduce speakers, help out in Hospitality, keep the StaRGazers' Lounge open, or help break down and pack up 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.

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 9:00-11:00 am Sunday morning. Sign up at least one week IN ADVANCE by contacting Dave Felt at feltdd@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> . There is a charge to take the Mensa test, by check or exact cash.

Mary Carney, 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. We are adding a couple "Speed Meetings" this year to allow quick face-to-face introductions. Let us know how they work.

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.
- If you see someone sitting alone, 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, and the meeting is open to GLAAM members who did not register for the RG.

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 Getty Center Museum:

Our van will take a group to the Getty Center Museum for approximately two hours. We intend to return in time for everyone to get lunch in Hospitality. If this tour is already full during sign-ups, you may pay the fee to be wait-listed. On Saturday morning at 9:00 am, come to the van parking area at the front of the hotel. People at the top of the payment list will be put in the van in order of payment received. You must be registered and in the waiting area and not receive a seat in order to receive a refund slip that you can take to the Registration table.

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 boxes. The game room will be open most of the time. 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 \$35 for the first child, and \$25 for each sibling. It includes 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 to the Registration table.
- Kids' Track includes programs on Sunday from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm (see below).
- Hospitality snacks are included in the 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:

The Schedule has activities for younger kids (about 8 and under) and older kids (about 9 through 17). 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. The Game Room (La Jolla) is available for use all day. Please remember to get all pieces back into their boxes. This schedule may change without notice.

Time	Activity	Ages	Room
9:45-10:00	Meet & Mix, 8 or younger	<9	Cat-D Alcove
9:45-10:15	Meet & Mix, 9 and older	9 +	La Jolla Game Room
10:00-10:50	Introduction to Chess	ANY	La Jolla Game Room
10:30-11:45	Werewolves and Villagers	9+	Los Angeles
11:00-11:50	Cookie Decorating	<9	San Diego
12:00-1:00	Math, Art & Puzzles	<9	San Diego
12:00-1:00	Lawyers Games	9+	Los Angeles
1:15-2:00	Deconstruct Cars	<13	San Diego
1:15-2:30	Philosophers Circle*	13+	Los Angeles
2:00-2:30	Explore Hotel	ANY	From San Diego
2:30-3:00	Snack Break	ALL	Hospitality
3:00-5:00	The Amazing Magic of Paws	ALL	Catalina A-B-C

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

*Philosopher's Circle - a discussion group to get young people thinking - is scheduled for 13 and older. It is open to people younger than 13, as long as the parents who accompany them sit across the room from the youth group in order to encourage independent thought.

Restaurants:

Aside from the RG supplying most meals and around-the-clock snacks, the Concourse Hotel has two restaurants: the Palmira Bar & Grill serving fresh seafood, expertly prepared steaks, exceptional wines and handcrafted cocktails, and the Concorde Lounge and Bar in the hotel lobby, featuring light meals and Starbucks coffee.

Because of the RG Sunday Brunch, there will not be breakfast or lunch served Sunday in Hospitality. For those not attending the Brunch, please enjoy light snacks in Hospitality or your choice (no-host) of the restaurants available in the hotel or any nearby.

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 WIFI in the guest rooms.

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 Lee Stillman onsite as soon as possible. Great bargains!

GLAAM RG 2016:

Next year is special: The 2016 Mensa Annual Gathering (AG) will be in San Diego June 29-July 3. We encourage everyone to put that on their calendar so they attend this national event. Our RG committee will consider whether we want to host a full RG, or no RG, or a mini-RG such as we did in 2009. Opinions are welcome.

Stay tuned for more information about the GLAAM StaRGazers' RG 2016!

If you have questions, contact:

Jay Friedlander livesoutwest@yahoo.com (310) 408-9699

Madeline Walker madeline@spidellspecialties.com (310) 569-8415