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Notes from Heather Booton, WeeM Chair

It's my privilege and honor to welcome you to a truly special occasion: our 50th in-person WeeM!



Chicago Area Mensa has a long tradition of throwing one heck of a Halloween party, and I'm incredibly proud to carry on that tradition this year. Whether you've been coming to WeeM for decades or this is your very first time, I invite you to step inside, enjoy our world of pure imagination, and help us celebrate 50 wonderful years together.

Of course, none of this would be possible without our amazing WeeM TeaM. They are the Oompa Loompas who keep this factory running, working behind the scenes to make the magic happen. You can identify them by their purple badges and WeeM TeaM ribbons. Please take a moment to thank them when you see them. They've worked incredibly hard to make this weekend special.

You'll also want to keep an eye out for our White Hat crew. Like Wonka's squirrels checking for bad nuts, they'll be checking badges, helping keep the party safe, and assisting with whatever you might need. If you have a question or need some help, just look for the white hats.



A huge thank you also goes to everyone who has already volunteered for a shift. You're the real golden ticket winners! If you haven't signed up yet, there's still time to pitch in. After all, you really don't want the Oompa Loompas writing a song about you. Scan the QR code at registration or in the program book, or track down our volunteer coordinator, Karen Gruebele, and sign up for a shift or three.

And, of course, there would be no WeeM without YOU. Whether this is your first WeeM or your forty-first, I'm so glad you're here. Explore, reconnect with old friends, meet some new ones, try something unexpected, and enjoy everything the weekend has to offer.

Thank you for being part of our 50th celebration. Your Golden Ticket has brought you here. Now let's make some memories!

Welcome to WeeM!

Heather Booton, 2026 HalloweeM Chair

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Notes from the Program Chair

Oompa Loompa doompety do,

I have the perfect program for you.

Oompa Loompa doompety dus,

If you are wise you'll listen to us.

What do you get when you wander around,

Hoping that talks and games can be found?

Staring at friends till your eyes start to blink,

Missing the speakers and events, I think!

(You could miss the tasty meals!)

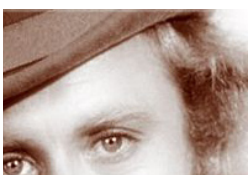
Don't lose this schedule or throw it away,

Check out the program and plan out your day!

You can use the online PAAG too,

Like the Oompa Loompa doompety do!

WELCOME TO WEEM 50! It's been an absolute honor to step in as Program Chair for CAM this year, and I'm completely thrilled with our lineup this weekend. We have a lot of new speakers this year, and a lot more nonmember speakers than usual sharing their interests. We have practical advice, history, science, fantasy, and comedy. There's also our usual games, tournaments, events, and wild revelry. Our speakers and organizers have put in a lot of spectacular work on this, and I have been extremely impressed with the knowledge they've brought.



For last-minute changes, the best source is the online PAAG (Program At A Glance). https://tinyurl.com/weem50PAAG. The Oompa Loompas behind the scenes will update it as things happen, usually without public singing. While looking at the schedule, don't forget to leave time for a volunteer slot, too. Snozzberries don't process themselves, you know! There are QR codes for both of those things on the next couple pages.

I want to give special thanks to Dewey Bradford, who has been absolutely priceless in this process. He's found many of the speakers and worked with me on many of the technical aspects.

Throw the gates open, and welcome to the Regional Gathering!

Lora Mitchell,

WeeM 50 Program Chair



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Policies & Reminders

Before you enjoy the festivities, please review the policies and reminders that follow.

Name Badges: Your name badge is your ticket to all the joys and wonders of HalloweeM. Please wear it at all times. With a group as large and diverse as ours, the tags are the only way we have of knowing who belongs to the RG. Anyone without a name badge should be referred to registration or to an event host (designated by their purple badges). Sorry, lost name badges cannot be replaced.

Smartphone, Tablet, and other E-Gear Users: Please be courteous by silencing your devices when at programs or events. If you don't know how to silence your device, please leave it in your room, lest you be mocked mercilessly. Free Wi-Fi is available in the hotel lobby. Scannable QR codes are posted near registration to allow you to easily download the program booklet and Program at a Glance (PAAG) in PDF form.

Program At A Glance (PAAG): The PAAG includes some updates to the program which were too late to make it into the program book. There may be signs posted at the programming rooms or near registration with information that is fresher still. We're confident you'll know what's up. Scan the code here, or go to: http://tiny.cc/2026PAAG

Some events are age-restricted (usually 21+), and you may be asked to show proof of age. We encourage everyone to download the PAAG daily. Finally, please note that a few events do not start and end on the same time boundaries as most.

Program Schedule: There are often intervals set between programs in the programming grid. Check the times listed carefully. The current daily PAAG is the most up-to-date source with respect to error corrections, room changes, speaker cancellations, etc.

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About the Speakers: Please bear in mind that the speakers have donated their time and resources to be with us this weekend. Many of them are not Mensans and this is their first (and maybe only) exposure to the organization. Mensa's reputation depends on the actions and attitudes of each of us. If you enter or leave during a program, please do so quietly in deference to the speaker and other attendees. Show consideration, even if you disagree with a speaker. Unless a speaker requests otherwise, please hold questions and comments until the end of the presentation.

Alcohol and Youth: Illinois law, hotel rules, and Chicago Area Mensa policies are strict when it comes to underage drinking. The legal drinking age here is 21. Please do not be insulted if you are asked for proof of age. Anyone with a brightly colored "under 21" badge is not permitted to be in areas where alcohol is available. These areas are easy to spot in hospitality and in the program guide. Adherence to this rule has been stressed to all White Hats. Even if you choose to allow your children to consume alcohol at home, you are NOT free to do the same at HalloweeM.

Dry-Erase Board: A dry-erase board will be available near the registration area for posting personal messages, program changes, and other announcements. Please re-cap the markers after use.

Decorations: Every year, we make a sizable investment of time and money in creating the right ambiance at HalloweeM. Please do not disturb or remove the decorations. Many of them are haunted. We cannot be held responsible for any paranormal activities if you remove the sacred monkey paw from its resting chamber.

Food and Beverages: All meals must be consumed in hospitality. Alcohol must be consumed in the room where it is served. Water coolers are available in all the speaker rooms, should you become parched. It is recommended that you carry a reusable water bottle to cut down on plastic waste.

And friends, please, clean up after yourselves! Just like life: strive to leave the table in a better state than when you sat down. If you drop something, don't leave it there. If something spills, contact a WeeM-Teamer or hotel staff. Thank you.

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Volunteers

HalloweeM is a big event. It takes a village of volunteers to ensure things run smoothly. The WeeM TeaM is always happy to accept new recruits to make our RG spectacular. Please scan this QR code (or go to https://cam.ivolunteer.com/weem_2026) and sign up! Volunteers will get one raffle ticket for every hour they help. Earn double tickets to help with Set-Up on Thursday and Tear-Down on Sunday!

If you volunteer for Hospitality, please sign up in advance. FYI: Mealtime shifts begin 30 min. prior to posted mealtimes to allow for implementation of sanitation protocols, including wearing gloves. Hospitality servers to assist with Friday night's dinner and Saturday's lunch are particularly appreciated as those are really busy meals. Volunteers will be able to sign up online from their phone, tablet, or computer DURING WeeM! To help with this, we will post fliers with the volunteer link and a convenient QR-code around WeeM. Scanning the code or going to the Web address will take you to our iVolunteer site where you can sign up for any shift at any time. If you don't have a smart device that can scan the code, please seek out the volunteer coordinator to sign up for a shift.

In exchange for donating 4 hours or more of your time, you receive a HalloweeM volunteer collector's pin, and the warm fuzzy feeling of knowing you made the world a better place for others! Each ticket you earn can be entered in the raffle on Sunday morning for prizes, so make sure to get your signed tickets in our raffle box before then.

Volunteers do not need to be present at the raffle drawings to receive major prizes, but minor prizes (< $21 value) will be awarded only to those who are on-site during the awards ceremony.

Please, join our volunteer village! With your help, we can do incredible things like WeeM!

A break from the crowds: There is a nature walk along the river just outside the south door of the hotel. It's a great place for a breather.

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Hugs: Yes, maybe, no? Colored stickers signify your hugging preference. Pick up a sticker for your name badge at the registration desk and check the stickers that others wear. If a hug sticker isn't on someone's badge, or if there is any doubt, please ask before hugging. And please remember, even if the sticker is green, "NO" means "NO." Big thanks to Cassie Sparks, of Stage Cat Studios, for the new hug stickers.

Harassment: HalloweeM will be a friendly and safe environment for our attendees. Unwelcome physical contact and other forms of harassment will not be tolerated. **Failure to comply with this policy may result in removal from the event without a refund, and police intervention, if warranted.** If you have concerns or need to report misconduct, find a member with a white hat (formerly known as the Peace Force). If you need immediate and direct intervention for your personal safety, request assistance from security at the front desk.

Late Check-out: When you check in, please let the hotel desk staff know if you need a late check-out time at the end of the weekend. Based on their expected vacancy level, they will do all they can to accommodate as many as they can.

Smoking: By Illinois state law as well as hotel policy, smoking (including vaping and E-cigs) is permitted outside the hotel in designated areas only.

Pet Policy: In keeping with CAM's pet policy, no non-human animals are allowed in any event space (hospitality or speaker/meeting rooms) unless they are service animals. Pets are still allowed in guest rooms.

Hotel kitchens and service corridors: Due to concerns from the hotel staff, **only** authorized volunteers will be allowed in the service corridors and hotel kitchens. If we are out of something and it needs to be replenished, please alert one of the hospitality volunteers or one of the event hosts who are wearing colored badges. We reserve the right to revoke the badges of anyone who goes in these areas without permission.

Photo Booth Is Back! A photo booth will be available from 7:30-11:30 PM Saturday, in the front hall outside Pretentious Drinking. There will be props you can use to make your photo even more special. You will get a copy of your masterpiece, and electronic copies will be saved.You have been warned...

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WeeM Lo

All Weekend

Young Children



For kids 8 and under, we will again have activities and plenty of opportunities for supervised play all weekend long in Maple. To help cover the cost of the babysitters, parents who did not pre-register their child for babysitting will be charged $30/day ($75 for Fri-Sun). The Kids' Room will be open Friday from 4:00 until 11:00 PM, Saturday from 9AM - noon, 1:00 - 5:30 PM, and 7:00 - 11:00 PM, and Sunday from 9 AM - noon. We will close the room for an hour during all scheduled meals (including Saturday evening) and will take "field trips" to some of the WeeM Programs that are especially good for kids. Look for signs outside the Kids' Room for up-to-the-minute details.

Little ones are welcome in the Kids' Room if they are able to play with a group of older children. While there will be two responsible adults with the children at all times, this is a popular program that draws a lot of kids and features plenty of "ages 3 and up" toys. If your children are not potty trained, parents are responsible for diaper changes. Snacks will be provided in the Kids' Room at intervals throughout the weekend, but you must pick up your kids and visit Hospitality when the Kids' Room is closed for meal breaks or whenever you are hungry.

Tournaments

Game Room: Ravinia A & B

The Game Rooms will open Thursday evening and remain open around the clock until Sunday afternoon, even if there is a tournament. (These times will be posted.) We have a wide assortment to choose from. Please do not leave your small children unattended in the game room.

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ves Kids!



We will once again have a kids-only costume parade at 6:30 PM Friday before the adult parade. Bring your kids directly to the parade in costume. Kids do not need to be registered for babysitting to participate in the costume parade.

IMPORTANT: For the children's safety, a responsible adult must sign each child in and out of the kids' room *every time* the child leaves or rejoins the program. Parents must remain in the hotel at all times when their children are in the Kids' Room. If children prove to be uncontrollable or dangerous, their parents will be asked to remove them from the room and they will not be allowed to participate further.

All Weekend

Tweens and Teens (12-17)

Participants under 18 years of age who are old enough to be unsupervised must register with a responsible adult or have their parents sign a release form at registration and provide contact information where a responsible adult can be reached ***at the hotel*** throughout the weekend.



and Games

Tournaments

Check in Hospitality near games entrance for Amazing Race sign-up and late-breaking tourneys. No sign-up required: 7 Wonders on Thursday at 7 PM and Logic Tournaments at 10 AM on Saturday. Please note: the "Beat the Reaper" tournament has been cancelled while we sort out all of the copyright lawsuits, as we're waiting for the electrician...

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All Weekend

Massage Therapists

Chair Massage will be available in the vendor hall on Friday 4 - 8, Saturday from 9 AM - 1 PM, and 3 PM - 7. and Sunday from 9 - noon. Cost is $20 for a 15-minute session. **Cash only**. Sign-up in advance to reserve your spot!!

Book Sale



Browse through donated book and non-book items, and take home some real treasures. We charge 50¢ per book or 3/$1, for paperbacks; $1 each for hardcovers or 3/$2.50; and $1.00/bag on Sunday. VHS and audio cassette tapes are $1, CDs are $2, and DVDs are $3. Books on tape or CD are $2. This year's designated philanthropic cause is **Reading In Motion** (https://www.readinginmotion.org/). Reading in Motion's goal is to get every student reading at grade level or above during their early years, especially students who need greater support due to their circumstances.

Alcohol-related programs

This year we have three alcohol-related programs: Lora's Chocolate/Beer program on Thurs., Jenn's Whisky Tasting on Fri., and Catrina's Chocolate/Wine program on Sat. Space at each of these programs is limited, and we want to give all our attendees an equal opportunity to participate in these events. So, when you attend, your badge will be punched, and you will not be able to attend another unless there is still space available 5 minutes after the program has started. Please arrive early for your event, as they are expected to max out.

This policy does NOT affect attendance at Pretentious Drinking, which, as always, is open to all WeeM attendees 21 or older.

Please bring a gov't.-issued photo ID and be prepared to show it, per our hotel contract.

Alcohol will **NOT** be available all night: access is usually shut down between 2:00ish and 11:00ish.

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Thursday

Setting Up

Mostly in the the Hospitality Area

Welcome! We're so glad you came to our RG! And you're so early! We don't officially open our doors until later, but you are more than welcome to roll up your sleeves and help out. There are dozens of things to do, and your help will be greatly appreciated. If you choose not to help out, please leave the sandwiches and beverages for those who are working, and don't be offended if we ask you to please get out of the way!

5:00 – 7:00 PM

Name That Tune Music Trivia

Heidi Conde

Michigan B

Come test your musical memory at a fun session of Name That Tune Music Trivia! You will hear a variety of music, including rock, pop, country, bluegrass, longhair, jazz, soul, and Broadway hits. Can you name the singer or band? The songwriter, composer, or lyricist? The name of the song or piece? Bring a team of up to six people, or form a team at the event. There will be door prizes and treats!

6:00 – 7:00 PM

Home Energy Savings with CUB

Matt Harvey

Birch

Join the Citizens Utility Board (CUB) to learn about your energy choices and ways to save money on your utility bills. During this presentation, we will discuss understanding your utility bills, your energy choices, your solar options, and energy-efficient programs that can help consumers save energy and money.

6:00 – 7:00 PM

M-etaphysical SIG Meet up!

Tommy and Kelly Galanis

Elm

Are you interested in new age and metaphysical experiences? We invite you to gather with us as we take a closer look at all things paranormal, psychic, lightwork, and more with the M-etaphysical SIG that's now over 100 members strong! This meet-and-greet is inspired by our monthly Zoom meetings that always offer engaging conversation, sharing, and learning in a safe space. All are welcome!

7:00 – 8:30 PM

Dinner

Hospitality

Catered by Lou Malnati's. Garden or Caesar Salad, Spaghetti w/marinara sauce, Bowtie pasta w/Lou's sausage, a selection of deep-dish and thin-crust pizzas.

Please friends, clean up after yourselves. Thank you!

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8:00 – 9:30 PM

Seven Wonders Tournament
Glenn Sutton

Michigan B

Come play Antoine Bauza's classic game *7 Wonders*! Any experience level is welcome. (If you need to learn the game, please come 15 minutes early or watch this video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XnBLz61FJYw&t=10s) Rounds will be played in 30 minutes, with each table's winner advancing to the next round. Come join us for some exciting fun!

8:00 – 10:30 PM

What is a Megagame: an Introduction and Experience
Casey Carraher, Oriel Maxime, Bryan Delfs

Willow

Find out about megagames: 20-50 person, 6-hour experiences merging board games and RPGs. Bryan introduced them to Casey and Oriel, and we were intrigued enough to bring our own design to AGOG. Here we'll do a brief interactive talk + Q&A, then spend the duration playing a custom Mini Megagame teaser. It'll be chaotic fun with no AGOG spoilers!

8:30 – 9:45 PM

HELL's M's Meeting
Michigan A



We're wearing black t-shirts with attack owls. We laugh a lot. We host and attend a lot of parties. On Sunday, we'll elect a Party Animal. Come see what HELL's M's is all about, or if you already know, come and greet your friends.

9:00 PM – Late

Social-Deduction Games: Werewolves of WeeM
Stephen Rider

Elm (Thu. & Sat.), Game Room (Fri).

Are you a werewolf? If not, who is??? Come discover which of your friends is secretly harboring special dietary needs in this classic game of social deduction and cold-blooded murder. New players are welcome! This program runs all three nights.

10:00 – 11:30 PM

Beer School: Drink Your Chocolate!
Lora Mitchell

Michigan B

We won't be taking a trip down a chocolate river, but come learn about the magic of chocolate beers. Step into a world of pure imagination to decode the wonderous alchemy of hops, malts, and nibs and how we get such miraculous flavors. We'll be tasting 3-4 beers and talking about the elemental miracles we're imbibing. **** Limited to 40 adults, 21+ only. ****

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Friday

8:00 – 9:30 AM

Breakfast

Hospitality

Continental Breakfast – Bagels & Schmear, Hot (microwavable) & Cold Cereals (some GF), Fruit, Yogurt, Milk, Coffee, Juices.

Please friends, make the effort to clean up after yourselves. Thank you!

9:00 - 10:15 AM

Quilling Paper Art

Kristen Petzinger

Willow



Quilling (or paper filigree) is a centuries-old art form where thin strips of paper are curled, shaped, and arranged to create intricate and beautiful designs. This versatile craft can be used to decorate everything from jewelry and greeting cards to ornaments and more. It's easy to learn and requires only a few basic tools to get started.

World's Most Interesting Design Mistakes

Diana Castro Cook

Birch

How brilliant people accidentally created some of history's biggest—and most fascinating—failures.This isn't just "look at these disasters." It's a session about why smart people make bad design decisions.

Meet the AMC!

Beth Weiss

Elm



Meet the American Mensa Committee! Many AMC members will be at WeeM, making this a great opportunity to hear about American Mensa's current initiatives, ask questions, exchange ideas, and talk about Mensa topics that are important to you.

Seeing Another Way

Roger E. Breisch

Michigan A

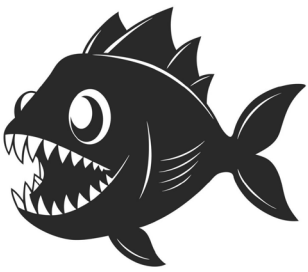
Changing perspectives changes the way we see the world, and changes lives. Every thought, idea, and assumption directs the future. Whenever we discover a new perspective, whenever we allow assumptions to evaporate, new worlds open before us. To the extent we allow those to change, flex, and become permeable, the future itself changes, becomes flexible, permeable, and new.

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9:00 - 10:15 AM cont'd.

Yoga with Tommy-Wan the Yogi
Tommy Ryan

Michigan B



Join Jedi Master Mr. Mensa 2016 and Registered Yoga Teacher Tommy Ryan for a practice that combines balance, flexibility, strength, and meditation, helping the mind, body, and spirit. Feel the force of prana flow as you focus on breath and movement. Intended to be an all levels class, there will be options for both beginners and advanced practitioners. Bring a mat or towel.

10:30 - 11:45 AM

UFOs (UnFinished Objects)
Kristin Petzinger

Willow

Come bring your UnFinished Object crafty things and visit with other Ms while you work towards making them Finished! Craft supplies not provided.

Investing Rules of the Road
Dustin Koehler

Birch

Edward Jones' 10 Rules of the Road to investing - Most common investing mistakes and how to avoid them; investing strategies to help reach long-term goals; what you can do now to prepare for retirement

GenX M's Meet & Greet
Tom Schnorrenberg

Elm

If you grew up on mixtapes, remember the sound of dial-up internet, and can quote "The Princess Bride," you'll be in good company at this relaxed Meet-and-Greet. Gen X Ms was founded as a gathering place for Mensans born between 1961 and 1981, though members of all ages are welcome to join us. It's the Weem equivalent of finding your table in the high school cafeteria—only with better stories.

Finding Your Calm Through Grounding
Susan Imbs

Michigan B

In her thirty years as an Esoteric Healer (EH), Susan developed her own approach to self-care based on EH techniques. This discussion and guided visualization walks participants through a practice to ground and center their chakras, enabling them to connect to their own source of calm.



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11:00 AM - 12:15 PM

Don't Slow Me Down with that Calculator...Mental Math Methods

Cliff Petrak

Michigan A

Learn to master a multitude of little-known, super-shortcut computational methods involving addition, subtraction, fractions, squaring, and multiplication. Unfortunately, our country consistently finishes among the bottom third of industrialized countries in the annual mental math competition for students. Learning these strategies and methods will leave your calculator-dependent friends in the dust!

12:00 Noon - 12:45 PM

M-Singles Over-50 Meetup

Hospitality (Ravinia C/D)

The title says it all. Look for the table tent!

Noon - 1:15 PM

Lunch Break

Hospitality

Ream's Award Winning Bratwurst (GF), Mac & Cheese, accompanied by Sides & our Salad Bar.

1:15 - 1:45 PM

Remembering Cynthia Clampitt

Hospitality



Join other Ms in a moment of remembrance for our member, Cynthia Clampitt. She was an incredibly influential, interesting member, and her presence is much missed across the organization. We will have a memorial corner for her in Hospitality for the entire event, as well as a memory book for people to sign to share with the family.

1:00 - 2:15 PM

That New Car Smell

Wendy Altenhof

Willow

In general, Americans love New Car Smell… until suddenly, one year, they didn't.

Surf and Sun: Dick Dale to The Beach Boys and More

Lisa Torem & John Philip Shenale

Birch

Author Lisa Torem and former Beach Boys' keyboard player, John Philip Shenale, share insights about the American instrumental/choral surf music craze.

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1:00 - 2:15 PM cont'd.

GenY Meet & Greet
Brittany Johns

Elm

GenY Mensans are members of Mensa born between 1976 and 1996, but we always keep it 100. Meet and greet with us so we can spill the tea on adulting, cancel yet another archaic establishment, and keep the FOMO away. Be forewarned, you may meet some rather odd personalities; we literally can't even.

2:00 - 4:00 PM

Drag Queen Bingo
Ruthie Keester

Michigan B

As one of the highlights of the 2025 Chicago AG, Ruthie Keester is back! Get ready for FREE Drag Queen Bingo. Prepare for a fierce and fabulous after 12 PM of laughter, dazzling performance, and amazing prizes. We are limited to just 100 seats, and the buzz on this program is already incredible, so be sure to show up on time for this first-come, first-seated program!

2:30 - 3:45 PM

Container Gardening
Ill. Extension Master Gardener Program

Willow

Join Illinois Extension Master Gardeners for this Container Gardening program, exploring how to add color and interest to any space. Learn about choosing containers and plants, simple design ideas, and proper planting and care.

Resilient Women Who Rock
Lisa Torem & John Philip Shenale

Birch

Stories about the triumphs and challenges faced by female folk/rock acts that music journalist/author Lisa Torem interviewed/wrote about, or whom John Philip Shenale, L.A. orchestral and band arranger and producer, worked with, including Tori Amos, The Bangles' drummer, Debbi Peterson, Judy Collins, Janis Ian and Janet Jackson.

SCUBA SIG Meet and Greet
Ann L Faget

Elm

Whether you're an avid diver or thinking about getting your feet wet, meet fellow SCUBA enthusiasts. Share your dive stories and plans. Get information about our December trip to Cozumel.

4:00 - 4:45 PM

HELL's M's 2026 SE Asia Cruise in Review
Mike McInerney

Michigan A

Join us for a review of HELL's M's 2026 SE Asia Cruise. From 2/24 through 3/10, more than 50 Mensans cruised from Taipei, Taiwan to Singapore, with stops at eight cities in six countries.

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4:00 - 5:15 PM

We're All Mad Here



Marie Kuipers

Birch

Enjoy a reading by Marie from her acclaimed memoir, "We're All Mad Here." The audience will pick the chapter/topic, and afterwards there will be time for Q&A.

Website: https://www.mariekuipers.com/

Sustainable M's Meet and Greet

Lacee Hudec

Elm

Do you enjoy gardening? Canning? Up-cycling? Raising chickens? Come meet other Ms who have also found their own little ways to live with the land using their skills and acquired knowledge. This is also an opportunity to bring some of your extras for a seed swap and/or chance to share some of your joys of harvest!

4:00 - 6:30 PM

Your Golden Dram Ticket Awaits! A Whisk(e)y Adventure



Jennifer Morris

Willow

The factors resulting in the beautiful golden hues of whisk(e)y aren't kept secret by an Oompa Loompa behind a factory door! Come with me and you'll be in a world of pure imagination—and liquid gold! Come join other enthusiasts—as well as newcomers—to taste the golden rainbow. **** Limited to 40 adults, 21+ only. ****

4:30 - 5:30 PM

FroMMMage Cheese Exchange

Hospitality (Ravinia C/D)

Say cheese. Make your best deals on the best wheels.

5:30 - 6:15 PM

Numbers: They're Just Too Darn Big!

Ian Randal Strock

Birch

Numbers are great! They help us count, quantify, and define things. But many are too big, like your social security number (long enough for every American to have three) or your credit card number (enough digits that everyone on the planet can have 125,000). This is an amusing and eye-popping look at the overuse of big numbers… and why some of them might actually make sense.

Friends of Bill W

Birch

Anonymous 12-step mutual support meeting open to all AA, NA, or fellow recovery program members.

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6:00 – 7:30 PM

Dinner

Hospitality

Turkey or Ham Steaks, Breaded Eggplant (V), Chicken Tenders (GF), accompanied by Sides & our Salad Bar.

Please note – Since the children's costume parade begins at 6:30, please allow families with children to eat first. Thank you.

As always, make the effort to clean up after yourselves. Please leave the space in better shape than how you found it. Thank you!

6:30 – 7:30 PM

Kids' Costume Parade/Contest

Colleen Baltis, Emcee

Michigan A/B

It's one of the many things for which we are (justly) famous: costumes. The children, and often families, show off their costumes: adorable, horrifying, funny, creative, traditional, heroes, and characters you've never heard of. Come by and cheer them on! Plus, you'll want a good seat for...

7:30 – 9:15 PM

Adults' Costume Parade/Contest

Nguyen Pham, Emcee

Michigan A/B

Another one of the many things for which we are (justly) famous. This year, the audience will vote for Best Pun, Worst Pun, Best Traditional, Best Group, and whatever other categories strike the fancy of our judges, who are, as always, very open to bribes.

Dress up as your favorite character. Put together a costume based on this year's theme. Create a pun-tastic ensemble. Wear a traditional costume. Show your sexy side. Be part of a group.

Be prepared to laugh, groan, and, sometimes, to be confused. Discover one of the reasons that our Chicago Area Mensa RG is so great.

Warning: Children and family costumes will be shown first. Occasionally the adult costumes are not appropriate for younger or more sensitive viewers.

If you will be entering the costume contest, be sure to get a numbered ticket and write the name of your costume for our photo gallery. Please speak loudly and clearly into the microphone. The judges and the audience would like very much to hear the description of your costume.

9:00 – 10:30 PM

AI Hysteria? Let's Get to the Bottom of It

Ed Spire

Birch

There's concern regarding possible negative effects of the current AI system evolution. This presentation will describe what's really happening and suggest what we should be doing about it.

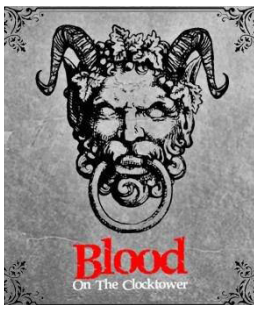
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9:00 – 11:30 PM

Blood on the Clocktower
Eli Hudec & Samantha Kelly

Elm

Blood on the Clocktower is a social deduction game where everyone has a role. Even after death, you still have a part to play, and can talk with the living as well as still having one final vote to be used on anyone.



9:30 – 11:00 PM

Off Our Rockers: Mensa Edition 2! — Still Unscripted and Aged to Perfection
Off Our Rockers/ Christopher Torem

Michigan A&B

Off Our Rockers is a 55+ improv ensemble comprised of seven members and a coach who have performed at venues all over Chicagoland, including at the Mensa AG in Chicago last summer. Our members are graduates from the Second City training program "Humor Doesn't Retire" and their coach and master of ceremonies, Law Torello, is a Broadway and television actor.

9:30 – 11:30 PM

Mensans Making Music
Thomas Ryan

Botanic

Expect Tommy and friends to sing, dance, and rock their way into your hearts and minds with musical performances, where you can sing along or request a tune that they will play if they know it!

9:30 – Late

Smartbar: Beer, Wine & Mead Exchange

Hospitality

Prepare to share.

9:45 – Midnight

Social-Deduction Games: Werewolves of WeeM
Stephen Rider

Game Room Ravinia A&B

Are you a werewolf? If not, who is??? Come discover which of your friends is secretly harboring special dietary needs in this classic game of social deduction and cold-blooded murder. New players are welcome! This program runs all three nights.





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Saturday

8:00 – 9:30 AM

Breakfast

Hospitality

Continental Breakfast Items plus Hot Breakfast … Scrambled Eggs, French Toast Bake, Tater Rounds, Sausage & Bacon.

9:00 – 10:15 AM

Sir Ernest Shackleton and the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration

Ken Levine

Botanic

Ernest Shackleton, an Antarctic explorer, is mostly well known for his Endurance Expedition, 1914-1916, when his bravery and leadership resulted in the survival and safe return of all 28 men from his ship, overcoming unimaginable odds. This program covers Shackleton's biography, his four Antarctic expeditions, and interesting facts about other men on his expeditions.

Ashleigh Brilliant & His Wonderful Epigrams

Alan Baltis

Birch

Ashleigh Brilliant made an amazing contribution to short-form literature. Like, REALLY short. He wrote some of the pithiest epigrams ever, many of which you know but did NOT know were created/copyrighted by him. Join me for as many of his wise, witty words as we can wedge into an hour. Things you've seen on T-shirts, posters, & mugs. "I may not be totally perfect, but parts of me are excellent."

Be A Persuasive Communications Master!

Danny Bobrow

Elm

Most people believe that persuasion entails presenting facts and arguments in support of one's position. The truth is that our brains are wired to make decisions based on emotions, and only then justify them with logic. Danny presets his 'Three Cs of Persuasive Communication' model for engaging with and influencing people by signaling caring, connection, and collaboration.

Twice Exceptional Neurodiversity: Giftedness as a Form of Neurodiversity & Its Co-Occurring Friends

Tara May

Michigan A

So often we talk about neurodiversity in silos—autism, ADHD, dyslexia — but we don't often explore giftedness itself as a form of neurodiversity, or how it overlaps with other neurotypes. My own experience navigating giftedness alongside OCD has taught me so much about the complexity of the human brain and how our strengths and challenges are often inextricably linked.

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9:00 – 10:15 AM cont'd.

Yoga
Thomas Ryan

Michigan B

See Friday's description, same time.

9:00 – 10:45 AM

Mensa Membership Test
Beth Weiss, Lora Mitchell

Willow

Not a Mensa member yet? Here's your chance. Aren't you having a blast here at WeeM? ? Didn't you meet a lot of fun, interesting Mensans? I bet people understood your puns and got your jokes – wasn't that a pleasant surprise! So join us and continue to party and play with us. We recommend you preregister. See Beth (Proctor) and Lora (the testing coordinator).

10:30 – 12:00 Noon

When Being Smart Isn't Enough: The Interpersonal Advantage
Bette Lawrence-Water

Michigan B

Ever been the smartest person in the room—and still lost the argument? This engaging and inspiring, research-backed session explores why intelligence alone doesn't guarantee success, and what does. This session covers the top ten interpersonal skills identified by human-resource professionals as invaluable for career (and life) success, and offers research-backed practical solutions and advantages for individuals and leaders. This session promises to be Informative, genuinely useful, and fun!

HalloweeM's Golden Anniversary: 50 Years of Puns & Fun
Alan Baltis

Birch

HalloweeM has grown from a humble start in 1976 to today's big-shouldered Mensa institution. The biggest & best Regional Gathering, it's thrived through dozens of hotels, committees, & themes. Join us for a rollicking tour through the highlights of 50 years of punny costumes, hospitality, programs, & tours, & games. Costume Parade! Fiendish Armchair Treasure Hunt! Pretentious Drinking! Amazing Race!

Our Future With AI
Lance Erlick

Elm

While AI has been in the works for decades, it burst into public view in 2022 with ChatGPT. Sifting through its great promises and inherent shortfalls, where might this take us over the next decades? How might humans and AI interact? What does all this mean for the future of humanity? Come join a discussion of the current state of AI, and where some leading voices in AI see this going.

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10:30 – 12:00 Noon cont'd.

Chicago Jedi
Chicago Jedi/ Ross Greenberg

Michigan A

The group 'Chicago Jedi' will demonstrate Lightsaber work & answer questions about what we are about.

Logic Problem Tournament
Oriel Maximé

Botanic

You know the type: 5 people, with 5 different types of cars and 5 different pets, live on the same street... See how you rate against your fellow Mensans on these six, never-before-seen problems: three traditional and three less common. Best solver over the 90 minutes wins accolades and praise!

11:00 – 12:00 Noon

Abundance: Native Plants, Indigenous Food Systems and Green Infrastructure
Charlie Neufeld

Willow

We will delve into these questions: what exactly is a native plant? How has our landscape changed since European colonization? What lessons can we learn from former inhabitants of this area about how food subsistence needs were met? This program explores how a general disconnection from nature by our society has blinded us to sustainable pathways forward.

11:00 – 1:30 PM

Betsy's 104th Birthday!

Hotel Parking Lot

Here's your chance to get a ride in a Model T!

Noon – 1:15 PM

Lunch Break

Hospitality

Mostaccioli w/Meat Sauce, Meatballs, Florentine Stuffed Shells, accompanied by Sides & our Salad Bar.

As always, make the effort to clean up after yourselves. Please leave the space in better shape than how you found it.Thank you!

1:00 – 2:30 PM

Artificial Intelligence for Beginners
Leo Doyle

Birch

If you've ever thought about getting involved with AI or are just AI curious, this talk is for you. Updated from last year's popular talk, this talk will be non-technical. Leo will demonstrate generating text, images, videos, and music using easily available free software. He does this locally on his laptop, NOT over the Internet because of privacy concerns. Come see the fun you can have with AI.

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1:00 – 2:45 PM

WeeM Pub Trivia
Kenya Zarns

Botanic

Compete for bragging rights in this pub-style quiz! Teams of up to 5 people will be challenged on a variety of topics to determine who is the brainiest of all!

NOTE: This quiz is mostly harmless, but there may be some mature content. Seating may be limited, so please arrive 5-15 minutes early to join a team and claim your spot! Ages 13+

1:30 – 2:30 PM

Kids LEGO® Time
Megan & Michael Bratkovich

Maple

Do your kids like building with LEGO® bricks? Here's some time for them to do so with other kids.

1:30 – 2:45 PM

The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade
Jim Poserina

Willow

In a few weeks, New York will host the 100th Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. And for the 14th time, Jim Poserina will be among the nearly 2,000 handlers who guide the famous balloons down through the streets of Manhattan. Go behind the scenes to see what it takes to be part of this iconic piece of Americana and what the parade-day experience is really like for those who make it happen.

Leadership Development Workshop: The Local Group Toolkit
Beth Weiss

Michigan B

The Local Group Toolkit is transforming how American Mensa supports Local Group volunteers by replacing static handbooks with a dynamic wiki. Discover practical guidance, templates, examples, and best practices that make Local Group leadership easier and more effective. Learn what's available today, what's coming next, and how you can help shape the Toolkit's future.

The Wacky World of Willy Wonka
Jean Jansen

Elm

A lively exploration and discussion of the book that started it all: 1964's "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" by Roald Dahl. We'll also talk about the two movies: 1971's "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory" AND 2005's"Charlie and the Chocolate Factory." Also, there will be candy, because it would be ridiculous to not include candy in such an event.

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1:30 – 2:45 PM cont'd.

Healing without Forgiveness: The Wisdom in Anger, Grief, and Resentment

Tara L Travia

Michigan A

Healing doesn't come from forcing the emotions or actions often associated with forgiveness—it comes from making room for the emotions that naturally arise from pain and betrayal. This presentation explores how anger, grief, and resentment can promote safety, healthy boundaries, and lasting healing, often more effectively than pursuing forgiveness before you're ready.

3:00 – 4:15 PM

Shopping for Behavioral Healthcare

Erika Byars

Willow

After 20 years of working in Behavioral Health, I've learned what good, affordable care looks like. The problem is, how does one shop for care in crisis? I'll provide a simple checklist to help roadmap you to the right direction.

It's Only Money

EJBoris

Birch

Trimes, 3-cent nickels, half dimes, double eagles, half unions, who is on a 3-dollar bill, or the $100,000 bill? Why don't you use pennies or nickels? Why is money not the root of all evil? You know about the US coins and currency you use every day. But earlier? What was previously used? What were they made of? We will try to keep it light—after all, "It's Only Money."

LDW: Leadership Roundtable: Questions, Ideas & Opinions

Beth Weiss

Michigan B

Every Local Group leader has questions, ideas, and opinions. This informal roundtable is your opportunity to discuss challenges, exchange best practices, and learn from the experiences of other Local Group leaders. Bring your questions, share your experiences, and remember: if you ask five Mensans, you'll probably get six opinions.

Urban Composting

Jeffery Williams

Elm

Learning how to turn waste into a sustainable solution, and the effects of doing so.

Voting Needs an Upgrade

Larry Garfield

Michigan A

Come learn about ranked choice voting (RCV), how it works, what problems it can solve, and how it can give voters more voice and more choice!

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3:00 – 5:00 PM

Special Effect Makeup: Zombies and Wounds Workshop

Casey Carraher

Botanic

Have you ever walked through a Halloween store and thought "I'd love to do this, but make this stuff myself!"? Well, here's your chance! Transform yourself (or part of yourself) and learn a few cool tricks of the trade!

3:00 – 6:30 PM

Poker Tournament

Scott Bialas

Hospitality

Think you've got the best poker face? Come prove it! Join us for a fun, low-pressure poker tournament filled with friendly competition, bad bluffs, questionable all-ins, and stories you'll probably exaggerate later.

4:30 – 6:00 PM

There, an App Again: My Unexpected Journey into Software Development

Matt Crawford

Michigan B

This story involves a board game, but I won't be teaching the game. It also involves a mobile web app, but I won't be teaching programming. What I will be telling you about is my unexpected journey into developing an app under contract for a game publisher. I will tell you how the project came about, how the deadline, price, confidentiality and other terms were set, and what the side effects were.

The Joy of Sprouts

Erika Bruhn

Birch

What can you grow in a jar, on your kitchen counter, with just a little effort, and be eating in only a few days? Sprouts! Come learn how easy and delicious home sprouting can be. We'll cover the health benefits, varieties, the step-by-step process for a successful harvest, and serving ideas. You'll leave ready to start your own sprouting adventure, with sample seeds to take home and try!

Subliminal Advertising—Real or Myth?

Gregg Siegel

Elm

Believers in subliminal advertising claim to see hidden images like the word SEX, disembodied genitals, skulls, and weird animals. But was it real or just pervy imaginations? And, did it really make people buy stuff? Come see some egregious examples and decide for yourself. BONUS: witness subliminal adjacent phenomenon like anamorphics, the Thatcher effect, variations on "Green Needle," and more!

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4:30 – 6:00 PM cont'd.

Mensa Foundation Meet-&-Greet: Unleashing Intelligence for the Benefit of Humanity

Nguyen Pham

Michigan A

Join Mensa Foundation President Nguyen Pham to explore the Foundation's work, vision, and commitment to gifted and neurodivergent individuals. Hear highlights from the October 2026 Foundation Forum, learn about current and upcoming initiatives, ask questions, pick up new materials, and discover how you can help create a more gifted-friendly, neuro-inclusive world.

Family Pool Time

Megan Bratkovich

Pool

If your kids have been begging to go swimming with other kids, here's their opportunity!

Candy is Dandy, But Liquor is Quicker; Curating Chocolate and Wine

Catrina Hays

Willow

Come with me, and we'll be in a world of pure imagination—chocolate and wine style. We will be sampling how these two elixirs may combine to create synergy or schism. **** Limited to 40 adults, 21+ only. ****

6:00 – 7:30 PM

Dinner Break

Like the last several years, there will be no dinner served tonight, though light snacks will be available. Ask a local for suggestions: Saranello's (in the hotel) is very good, and Wheeling's famed "Restaurant Row" is minutes away on Milwaukee.

7:30 – 9:30 PM

Epicurean Experience

Hieu Nguyen & John "Dewey" Bradford

Botanic

We'll have an all-new variety of thematic, diverse, and sometimes bizarre foods and non-alcoholic drinks to explore. Take a nibble of things you've never seen and/or heard of before, or perhaps you are familiar with, but were reluctant to try. This event is alcohol free, so anyone not wearing an "under 21" badge should visit before partaking of Pretentious Drinking. Please note: we aren't serving a meal, just samples and sips, so come for curiosity, not dinner.



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7:30 – 11:30 PM

Photo Booth

A photo booth will be available in the front hall outside Pretentious Drinking. There will be props you can use to make your photo even more special. You will get a copy of your masterpiece, and electronic copies will be saved in case we need to undermine your future Senate bid. (Just kidding.) (Not kidding.)

8:30 – 9:45 PM

Pretentious Drinking

Alan & Colleen Baltis and Their Merry Band of Pourmeisters

Botanic

Liqueurs. The fancy stuff. Polished, cosmopolitan, perhaps even a bit snooty. The stuff you graduate to from beer and wine. You'd like to know more but, gosh, look at that price. What if that pricey potion isn't quite the palate pleaser you expected? Rejoice! As in years past, you can sample some truly amazing liqueurs–and your money's no good. Details are included in your registration package. We will supply a wide range of weird and wonderful concoctions from around the world. You can determine which you'd like to own, which should be left on the shelf, and which you should give to your arch-nemesis as a "thoughtful" gift. Obviously, you must be of legal drinking age to join us. Snobbish accents and extended pinkies optional.

The Mensa Foundation is generously sponsoring the sweets table at Pretentious Drinking. Stop by or attend their Meet & Greet to find out more about the year-round work Mensa Foundation does to unleash intelligence for the benefit of humanity.

Participants must be over 21. Please bring a gov't. issued ID and be prepared to show it.

PLEASE NOTE: The alcohol in Pretentious Drinking **MUST** remain in Botanic. Please help us maintain our wonderful relationship with the hotel. Thank you.

9:00 – 11:30 PM

Social-Deduction Games: Werewolves of WeeM

Stephen Rider

Elm

Are you a werewolf? If not, who is??? Come discover which of your friends is secretly harboring special dietary needs in this classic game of social deduction and cold-blooded murder. New players are welcome! This program runs all three nights.

10:00 – Late

Saturday Night Dance

DJ: Ed Barta

Botanic

Please join DJ Ed Barta for our Saturday-night dance.

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Sunday

8:00 – 9:30 AM

Breakfast
Hospitality

Continental Breakfast Items plus Hot Breakfast … Scrambled Eggs, French Toast Bake, Tater Rounds, Sausage & Bacon.

9:00 – 10:30 AM

Lactofermentation: Why You Shouldn't Be Afraid!
Jim Thommes

Willow

Jim plans to discuss growing your own vegetables, then fermenting them. He'll discuss the different fermentation methods as well as the reasons people ferment foods. Caution! He will also provide some hot sauce tastings.

9:30 – 11:00 AM

Amazing Race - WeeM Style
Jill Sackett

Michigan B

Amazing Race for Mensans! Based on the TV show, teams of 2-4 competitors complete a variety of tasks, some cerebral, some lighthearted, on their way to the final "Pit Stop" and victors' bragging rights. See sign-up sheet by game room for more details.

10:00 – 11:00 AM

CAM ExComm Board Meeting
Elm

Lisa Slankard, CAM Local Secretary

In order to best serve the people that elected us, we meet regularly, discuss things, vote on things, and decide things, always emphasizing and advancing the common good. All CAM members are welcome.

11:00 AM – 12:30 PM

Awards and Announcements
Hosted by Lisa Slankard & Heather Booton

Hospitality (Ravinia C/D)

Find out who earned CAM awards, who is the HalloweeM Party Animal (as designated by the HELL's M's who vote starting Sunday around midnight), and the WeeM volunteers who won large and small prizes for serving selflessly this weekend. Everyone who volunteers should fill out a raffle ticket for every hour they contributed (double if you signed up before WeeM or work some of the shifts that qualify for double and even triple tickets).

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3:15 PM – Later

Anyone with time to spare?

Time to clean up! Please pitch in and give us a hand. If you volunteer, you ***may*** go home with some unused food or beverages, but you will ***definitely*** go home with our thanks, and a collectable volunteer pin.

Presenter Biographies

Wendy Altenhof

That New Car Smell (Fri.)

Wendy recently retired after 32 years in the auto industry. As a materials engineer, she got to work on projects all over the car.

Alan Baltis

Ashleigh Brilliant & His Wonderful Epigrams & HalloweeM's Golden Anniversary (Sat.)

An alpha geek, collector with more than 100,000 comic books, magazines, books, puzzles, games, CDs, & LPs. Loves live comedy, music, theater. Been to all 50 state capitols with his wonderful M wife, Colleen. Mensa life member for 50 years. Won on *Jeopardy!*, hosts Pretentious Drinking, and a weekly podcast at relentlessgeekery.com.

Scott Bialas

Poker Tourney (Sat.)

Scott and Emily have been happily married for almost 20 years and playing poker even longer. Together, they've mastered the art of bluffing each other- whether at the card table or deciding what's for dinner.

Danny Bobrow

Be A Persuasive Communications Master! (Sat.)

Daniel A. "Danny" Bobrow (BOB-roe) is the creator of The Art of First Impressions™ and The Persuasion Blueprint™, communication mastery programs that help businesses build trust and drive ethical conversion. Danny is the Founding Executive Committee Chair of the American Academy for Oral Systemic Health and holds two MBAs from the University of Chicago and K.U.L. Belgium. A Distinguished Toastmaster, mediator, mountaineer, and endurance athlete, Danny champions patient persistence and respectful resilience.

Megan Bratkovich

Kids Lego Time & Family Pool Time (Sat.)

Megan Bratkovich has been a member of Chicago Area Mensa since 2011, and has two kids who are running around here somewhere.

Roger E. Breisch

Seeing Another Way (Fri.)

Roger Breisch refers to himself as Speaker/Provocateur. Through his experiences in business, and while on crisis hotlines, speaking, writing, and shepherding numerous civic organizations and activities, he always tries to question assumptions and provoke new thinking.

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Erika Bruhn

The Joy of Sprouts (Sat.)

Erika Bruhn never expected that a handful of seeds and a mason jar would become a favorite hobby, but that's exactly what happened. Fascinated by how quickly sprouts grow and delighted by the satisfying crunch they add to meals, she enjoys encouraging others to give sprouting a try and discover the joy of their own countertop gardens.

Erika Byars

Shopping for Behavioral Healthcare (Sat.)

I am a Chicago-born, Los Angeles–based crisis care management professional with over 20 years of experience in behavioral health, addiction treatment systems, and family care coordination. I have acquired a deep understanding of the clinical, operational, and financial complexities families face during behavioral health crises.

Casey Carraher

What is a Megagame (Thu.), Special Effect Makeup: Zombies and Wounds Workshop (Sat.)

Casey Carraher is a lifelong collector of hobbies who recently fell headfirst into the gruesome world of special effects makeup. When he isn't making people look alarmingly injured, he's an avid board gamer with a particular love for megagames—because apparently regular-sized hobbies just aren't complicated enough.

Heidi Conde

Name That Tune Music Trivia (Thu.)

Heidi has written questions for and hosted 44 trivia sessions, including three music trivia sessions. She has a music collection spanning many genres and decades. She has always been surrounded by music, with a mom who sang in nightclubs and a choir teacher daughter. Heidi will play a variety of music for your listening and competitive enjoyment.

Diana Castro Cook

World's Most Interesting Design Mistakes (Fri.)

Diana Castro Cook is a lifetime member of Mensa, technology architect, parent to two wonderfully unique adults, book-club organizer, board-game enthusiast, and former community theatre person. She loves exploring how everyday things work—and why they sometimes don't. Her interactive presentations blend stories, humor, and audience participation.

Matt Crawford

There, an App Again: My Unexpected Journey into Software Development (Sat.)

Matt Crawford, Mensa member since 1990, retired from the world of physics, large-scale data storage, global networking, and project management to lead a life of contemplation, travel, and gaming. The board gaming world pulled him back again to do something for pay that he would have done for free!



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Bryan Delfs

What is a Megagame: an Introduction and Experience (Thu.)

Bryan Delfs has played in a dozen mega games around the country and has run control twice. He enjoys the social interaction and intrigue within the story building of the game. His love of the Game of Thrones and mega games created the perfect platform for designing this new experience.

Leo Doyle

Artificial Intelligence for Beginners, Update (Sat.)

Leo Doyle has degrees in electrical engineering and computer science; he studied AI in grad school and spends much of his spare time experimenting with AI. Leo was vice president of the third-largest Internet provider in the world and started the first Internet company in Indiana in 1992. He was a professor at Purdue. Leo is a life member of Mensa.

EJBoris

It's Only Money (Sat.)

His previous programs on English and US History and geography were pretty good. He claims to be filled with a variety of fascinating and utterly useless information. Let's see if the program is interesting, informative, and entertaining like he says.

Lance Erlick

Our Future With AI (Sat.)

Lance Erlick has given public presentations since 2014 on Artificial Intelligence to libraries, Mensa, and other venues. He worked with computers and programming since age 18, watched capabilities grow exponentially, and has had an interest in robotics and AI throughout his life. His *Android Chronicles* trilogy was published by Kensington Books.

Ann L Faget

SCUBA SIG Meet and Greet (Fri.)

Ann has been an enthusiastic SCUBA diver for over 30 years. She is a frequent visitor to Cozumel and enjoys sharing her love of the island.

Tommy and Kelly Galanis

M-etaphysical SIG Meet up! (Thu.)

Soulmates, lovers, and best friends, Tommy and Kelly Galanis's twin flames have burned brightly together for over 28 years. Highly in tune with premonition, sensation, and higher power, they use their spirituality as a guide for a successful, happy, and peaceful life and enjoy helping others find the spark in their life that brings purpose and joy.

Larry Garfield

Voting Needs an Upgrade (Sat.)

Larry Garfield is Secretary of FairVote Illinois and one of the organization's co-founders, having served on the Board since FVIL's incorporation in 2020. From 2020-2024 he led FVIL's Speakers Bureau, training volunteer speakers and serving as lead presenter. In 2022, he led the ground team for the first major referendum win in Evanston (82% Yes).

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Ross Greenburg/Chicago Jedi

Chicago Jedi (Sat.)

Chicago Jedi is a welcoming community dedicated to compassion, courage, service, justice, and self-improvement. Through training, mindfulness, leadership, martial arts, and community service, we strive to apply Jedi principles to everyday life and make a positive difference in the world around us.

Matt Harvey

Home Energy Savings with CUB (Thu.)

The Citizens Utility Board educates Illinois utility consumers on various topics such as energy efficiency programs, consumers' rights and utility bill savings, establishing relationships with other community organizations and serving both English- and Spanish-speaking constituents.

Catrina Hays

Candy is Dandy, But Liquor is Quicker; Curating Chocolate and Wine (Sat.)

Catrina has enjoyed exploring wine starting in Sonoita, AZ to Paso Robles in CA and close to home at Lynfred Winery nearby the WeeM hotel. She enjoys culinary adventures of all kinds and especially the way food and wine interact to create interesting and unexpected combinations.

Eli Hudec & Samantha Kelly

Blood on the Clocktower (Fri.)

My name is Eli Hudec, and I am 14 years old. I have been playing and hosting Blood on the Clocktower since it first arrived in Mind Games 3 years ago. Samantha (Sam) Kelly is an avid board gamer with a love for social deception/deduction. As part of the California Clocktower group responsible for the Starpass Summit convention, she has played and storytold enough Blood on the Clocktower to border on addiction. As someone who loves world-building, lying, and building community, she is always looking for new players to welcome to Ravenswood Bluff.

Lacee Hudec

Sustainable M's Meet and Greet (Fri.)

Lacee Hudec is the epitome of activity. Never satisfied with sitting still, she enjoys gardening, board gaming, baking, playing bagpipes and tenor drums, raising two M kids with her M husband, and actively volunteering in the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

Susan Imbs

Finding Your Calm Through Grounding (Fri.)

Susan Imbs, a founding member of the National Association for Esoteric Healing, holds a Ph.D. in World Spirituality. She is an ordained non-denominational minister, second-degree pagan priestess, master esoteric healer, published author, and professional educator, now happily retired.

Jean Jansen

The Wacky World of Willy Wonka (Sat.)

Jean is a librarian, working in the field of Youth Services in Public Libraries. She is a lifelong chocolate and candy enthusiast, longtime fan of Roald Dahl's stories for children, and unrelenting reading addict.

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Brittany Johns

GenY Meet & Greet & Mensans Making Music (Fri.)

Dr. Brittany Johns, PharmD, is a Milwaukee-based musician, long-term care pharmacist, and GenY ExComm member-at-large. You can catch her on stage with her bands Rockodile and Orange Drink, frequenting her local farmers' markets and bookstores, and trying every restaurant in her city.

Ruthie Keester

Drag Queen Bingo (Fri.)

Comedian, TV host, and overall bawdy broad, Dear Ruthie is thrilled to entertain you. Cohost of the hit reality show "Camp Wannakiki" (available on OutTV, Amazon Prime, and Roku), Dear Ruthie appears in the book "Legends of Drag: Queens of a Certain Age." Her songs can be downloaded on Spotify and iTunes. Follow her on FB (Dear Ruthie) and IG (@RuthieKeester).

Dustin Koehler

Investing Rules of the Road (Fri.)

I am Dustin Koehler, and I am a financial advisor with Edward Jones in Sussex, WI. I began my career with Edward Jones in 2009, and entered the financial advisor role in 2015. I pride myself on making a positive difference in the lives of our clients.

Marie Kuipers

We're All Mad Here (Fri.)

Marie Kuipers is the Grammar Hammer, an eagle-eyed copy editor dedicated to making prose purr like a horny cougar. She graduated from Georgetown University 200 years ago and holds an editing certification from the prestigious University of Chicago Graham School, which, according to her mother, makes her "unemployable." This is her first book.

Bette Lawrence-Water

When Being Smart Isn't Enough: The Interpersonal Advantage (Sat.)

Bette Lawrence-Water, MS, CPC, is an educator, coach, and community advocate with 25+ years of leadership experience. She lectures on community and public health at Benedictine University and Dalian Medical University in China. Her work has earned recognition from the American Heart Association and the Johns Hopkins Delta Omega Honor Society for Public Health, among others. A believer in "paying it forward," Bette is active in coaching, consulting, and service, and resides in Naperville with her husband and three cats.

Ken Levine

Sir Ernest Shackleton and the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration (Sat.)

Ken Levine journeyed to Antarctica four times, including the South Pole, the Antarctic Peninsula, South Georgia Island, Snow Hill Island, and McMurdo Sound. He has visited polar exhibits in England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Norway, Argentina, Chile, Australia, and New Zealand. He has an extensive library of books and videos of Antarctic history.



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Oriel Maximé

Megagame (Thu) & Logic Problem Tournament (Sat.)

Oriel Maximé is a general-purpose STEM-y Mensan. He is a published Logic Problem creator, and has run this WeeM tournament for more than two decades.

Tara May

Twice-Exceptional Neurodiversity: Giftedness as a Form of Neurodiversity & Its Co-Occurring Friends (Sat.)

Tara May is a leader in the movement for neurodiversity in the workplace. She is CEO of Aspiritech, a revolutionary tech company that employs more than 100 autistic adults representing more than 90% of its team. Tara sits on the Board of Directors of HAAPE and Neurowrx, advocating for neurodiversity and employment internationally.

Mike McInerney

HELL's M's 2026 SE Asia Cruise in Review (Fri.)

Mike and DD are world travelers and love to share photos, videos, and stories of their adventures.

Lora Mitchell

Beer School: Drink Your Chocolate! (Thu.)

Lora Mitchell often gets confused with being an Oompa Loompa, but she probably won't be singing if people misbehave. This year she really isn't sure which way is up, so if you see her in the hall, just say bibbidy boo!

Jennifer Morris

Your Golden Dram Ticket Awaits! - A Whisk(e)y Adventure (Fri.)

Jenn (she/her) has visited numerous distilleries across Scotland and Kentucky, and has attended whiskey festivals in England and Massachusetts. During her travels, she frequents whisky-focused bars, learning from locals, and soaking up the culture - often with a side of haggis! While Jenn's tastes center on Scotland's Speyside region and wander across the Highlands, she looks forward to visiting Orkney, Shetland, and the Hebrides on future visits.

Charlie Neufeld

Abundance: Native Plants, Indigenous Food Systems and Green Infrastructure (Sat.)

Charlie Neufeld is a co-founder of Savanna Land Solutions, an ecological restoration and native plant landscaping company. Declared a renaissance man by some, he combines multi-disciplinary passion for music, art, and design with the living world. He strives to show others the capacity for richness we can all bring to our own lives.

Hieu Nguyen & Dewey Bradford

Epicurean Experience (Sat.)

Newlyweds Hieu Nguyen and Dewey Bradford are a dynamic duo eager to share their food adventures with your taste buds. Hieu is a supertaster and Dewey is always up to the challenge to try new foods. With their combined backgrounds in Asian, European, and American cuisines, they are excited to host EE for the sixth year.

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Off Our Rockers / Christopher Torem

Off Our Rockers: Mensa Edition 2!—Still Unscripted and Aged to Perfection (Sat.)

Join Off Our Rockers, appearing for the first time in Wheeling! Off Our Rockers is a vibrant 55+ improv ensemble comprised of seven members and a coach whose goal is to bring humor to every show with a unique perspective and infectious energy. They will perform a series of classic and original improv games inspired by audience suggestions.



Cliff Petrak

Demonstrating and Teaching Mental Math Methods (Fri.)

Cliff Petrak retired after 40 years of teaching math at Brother Rice H.S. in Chicago. He is the author of a book detailing 62 shortcut methods dealing with addition, subtraction, fractions, squaring, and multiplication. He has spoken in 16 states and Canada to various groups at over 130 math conferences, schools ,and libraries. Mental math is his passion!

Kristen Petzinger

Quilling Paper Art & UFOs (UnFinished Objects) (Fri.)

Kristen Petzinger has rarely met an art or craft she doesn't like. When not planning a trip or doing wooden jigsaw puzzles, she is likely making stained glass suncatchers, jewelry, or other art.

Nguyen Pham

Costume Contest Emcee (Fri.) & Mensa Foundation Meet-&-Greet (Sat.)

Nguyen Pham (he/him) has been a proud SF Regional Mensa member since 2010. Crowned Mr. Mensa at his first American Mensa AG, he then emceed the pageant for eight years, helping raise over $100K for the Mensa Foundation. He serves as Foundation President, AMC Director of Science & Education, and Vice Chair of Mensa's QueerSIG. Follow him @YayNguyen.

Jim Poserina

The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade (Sat.)

Jim Poserina of Central New Jersey Mensa became a balloon handler in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in 2011. Over the years his assignments have included Mickey Mouse, Kool-Aid Man, Pikachu, Ronald McDonald, and Bluey.

Stephen Rider

Werewolves of WeeM (Thu., Fri. & Sat.)

Stephen is a life member of Mensa, and probably best known for his ongoing struggle with lycanthropy. He holds nightly support meetings throughout WeeM.

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Thomas Ryan

Mensans Making Music (Fri.), Yoga (Fri. & Sat.)



Tommy Ryan is the Mx. Mensa 2016 winner and current pageant host, as well as a former communications officer on the AMC. He loves music, yoga, acting, Star Wars, LOTR, and so much more! He's excited to share his talents and passions with you!

Jill Sackett

Amazing Race - WeeM Style (Sun.)

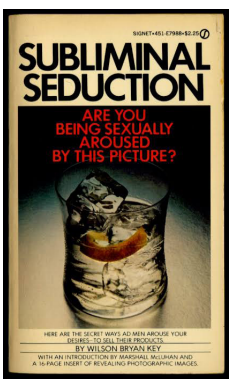
Jill is an "Amazing Race" fan, avid gamer, and occasional event-planner celebrating her 13th anniversary of planning these whimsical and cerebral challenges.

Tom Schnorrenberg

Gen X Ms Meet and Greet (Fri.)

Tom Schnorrenberg is the current Gen X Ms Coordinator, and former Boston Mensa Assistant Local Secretary. Beyond all things Gen X, he enjoys exploring various world cuisines, a wee dram of whisky here or there, and hanging in the games room.

Gregg Siegel



Subliminal Advertising—Real or Myth? (Sat.)

Gregg Siegel is a freelance copywriter, short-piece humor writer, former freelance joke writer for several late-night shows and comedians, and a competitive punner. None of these activities utilize subliminal techniques. At least as far as you know.

Lisa Slankard

CAM ExComm Meeting, Awards & Announcements (Sun.)

Lisa Slankard is Chicago Area Mensa's Local Secretary.

Ed Spire

AI Hysteria? Let's Get to the Bottom of It (Fri.)

Ed Spire is co-lead of NWSOFA's Restore our Democracy project, where we focus on issues regarding the effectiveness of US democracy. Prior to his retirement, he founded two small software businesses in Chicago, helped start a successful software IPO, and retired as senior director of architecture and engineering for that company.

Ian Randal Strock

Numbers: They're Just Too Darn Big! (Fri.)

Ian Randal Strock (ianrandalstrock.com) is a writer, editor, and publisher, with a wide range of interests. He is the publisher and editor-in-chief of Fantastic Books, and the author of "Punctilious Punctuation" and the fiction collection "Wandering Through Time." He has not written a book on numbers to accompany this talk (yet).

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Glenn Sutton

7 Wonders Tournament (Thur.)

Glenn Sutton is an Agile Coach, Project Manager, Scrum Master, IT Programmer, and a member of Toastmasters to boot! He has run tournaments for over twenty years, ranging from CCGs to board games to even VR events, including the "7 Wonders" tournaments for over a decade here at WeeM.

Jim Thommes

Lactofermentation: Why You Shouldn't Be Afraid! (Sun.)

Jim Thommes started fermenting vegetables in 2018 because he enjoyed the flavor it brought to the food. He started experimenting with hot sauces and salsas, then started making them hotter and hotter. Next thing he knows, he's an admin on two Facebook fermentation pages that have a combined membership of almost 250K members.

Lisa Torem & John Philip Shenale

Resilient Women in Rock, Surf and Sun (Fri.)

Author Lisa Torem co-wrote books with Bowie singer Ava Cherry and songwriter Jim Peterik and wrote books about the discographies of Tori Amos, Billy Joel, Suzanne Vega (and The Beach Boys, available in late 2026). She has interviewed The Kinks, The Zombies, Judy Collins, among others. Lisa is excited to meet Mensa members in 2026!

John Philip Shenale, an L.A. orchestral and band arranger and producer, has worked with Janet Jackson, Tori Amos and The Beach Boys, among others.

Tara Travia

Healing without Forgiveness: The Wisdom in Anger, Grief, and Resentment (Sat.)

Dr. Travia is a licensed psychologist, EMDR certified practitioner, consultant, and CEU provider of courses on advanced topics in the treatment of trauma including integrating ACT and EMDR techniques and helping clients re-build their sense of self separate from their traumatic history. She has been treating complex trauma for over 15 years in various settings with a focus on driven, gifted individuals.

Paulie O'Lithic

Dinosaurs: Personal Hygiene - Challenges and Triumphs (Fri.)

Dr. Paulie O'Lithic, who is a professor at THE University of Bleek County, Montana (consistently ranked among the top universities in the southwest section of the county - Go Trilobites!) recently made a discovery that will necessitate a serious rethinking of the hotly debated subject of dinosaur personal hygiene and bathroom habits in general. He led a crack team of excavationists that uncovered a perfectly preserved, albeit moderately embarrassed, specimen that is about to experience frustration - or *IS* it? Be a part of this prehistoric event!



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Stan Ward

Betsy's 104th Birthday Party! (Sat.)

Stan has been an active member of Mensa for 25 years, and since retirement has been touring, restoring, repairing, and talking about Betsy, Model T Fords, and old cars in general.

Beth Weiss

Several programs

Beth Weiss is the Regional Vice Chair for Region 4, Lead for the Sustainable Revenue & Events pillar, and chair of the Local Group Toolkit Task Force. It's been rumored that she said "no" at some point during her volunteer career, but no one has ever been able to corroborate the story.

Jeffery Williams

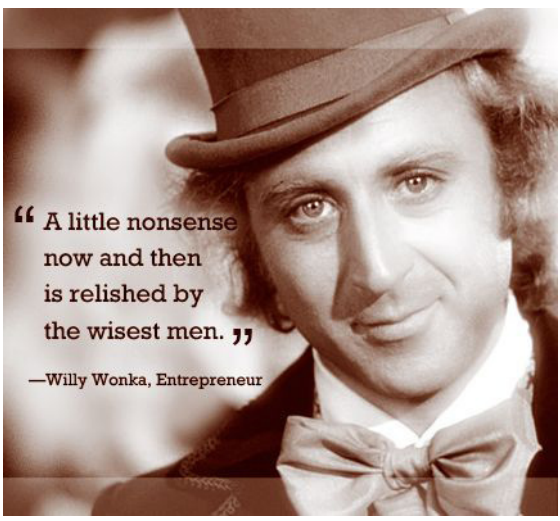
Urban Composting (Sat.)

Jeffery Williams, a chef and composting wizard, merged his two passions together to help his community via food and soil building.

Kenya Zarns

WeeM Pub Trivia (Sat.)

Kenya Zarns is a competitive trivia player, writer, and host who chaired Mensa's CultureQuest® trivia competition from 2023 to 2025. A marketing and communications professional by trade, Kenya has written and run trivia events for Mensa RGs and AGs as well as for external professional organizations.



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A Very Special Thanks to:

- Mensans **Janice Esser**, and **Alan & Colleen Baltis**, for their ongoing generous donation to Pretentious Drinking.





And to the **Mensa Foundation** for its generous support of our sweets table at Pretentious Drinking. We're excited for the opportunity to work with The Foundation and highlight the year-round work they do to unleash intelligence for the benefit of humanity.

MENSA FOUNDATION



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HalloweeM 50

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Chicago Area Mensa's

WeeM TeaM

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Program Chair, Hosp. Minion..... Lora Mitchell
Hospitality Chairs . Susan Woodill, Rhonda Peek
Program Co-chair ..... John "Dewey" Bradford
Beverages & Program Book.....Dave Gudjonis
Game Warden .....Ed Barta
Volunteer Coordinator.....Karen Gruebele
Vendor Coordinator..... Rae Goodman
Registrars .....Lynn Collier,Theo Sparks
On-site Registrar.....Elizabeth Weihert
Treasurer.....Allison Reeves
Tournaments Coordinator ..... Glenn Sutton
Book Sale..... Teresa Tucker & Robert Little
AV Chair ..... Damian Christianson
AV Co-chair....Peter DuDeck, Art Sparks,& Greg Holcombe
White Hats Coord., Decorations...Lisa Slankard
Photographer ..... John Powers
Photographer Emeritus..... John Muellner
Webmaster.....Barb Pohl
Trucking Coordinator..... Clyde Forrester
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Logistics .....Karl Kugler
Logo & Pins..... Casey Carraher
Pretentious Drinking.....Colleen & Alan Baltis
Kids' Chair .....Megan Bratkovich
Costume Contest MC .....Nguyen Pham
Emcee Emeritus, Judge .....Robert Stalzer
Room Matching ..... Kris Petzinger
Epicurean Experience.....Hieu Nguyen
and John Bradford
Social Deduction Games.....Stephen Rider
CAM LocSec.....Lisa Slankard

These are the people who will be wearing purple badges. Please express any concerns, problems, or offers of thanks to them.

THANK YOU, VOLUNTEERS!