

The French Broad Mensa Newsletter

BROADCAST

Vol. 26, No. 8, August 2020

<http://frenchbroad.us.mensa.org>



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On the Cover

The current pandemic has made it seem that time has slowed to a crawl. But Mother Nature continues her pace, encouraging us with these “smile flowers” as my niece used to call them.

Sharron Armel

Submissions to the Broadcast

Deadline for articles, letters, comments, etc. is the 15th of each month preceding publication. Original material is welcomed. Maximum length is 250 words. Editor reserves the right to decline publication or to edit submissions, as long as intent and meaning are retained.

Please, no personal attacks, except against the Editor (if you so choose). The Editor would be so very glad to hear from you that she will tolerate nearly anything!

**Events Calendar
August 2020**

**In-person events will be
scheduled as soon as it's safe
to do so. None for August.**

We want everyone to stay healthy. We'll resume regular activities as soon as practical. Check the website for up-to-date information.

As circumstances require, the Executive Committee will continue to conduct business via email, telephone, telepathy, or Zoom.

Regular and special events are open to members in good standing. RSVPs are important for table planning. Please respond if you plan to attend an event. If you don't, we might not be able to seat you. And don't forget to look for the Big Yellow M Table on the table at Mensa events!



New Members: French Broad Mensa welcomes you! Watch your mail for a coupon that you can trade for a \$5 contribution to your first meal with the group.

Stay Safe

Stay Healthy

Stay Connected

<http://www.frenchbroad.us.mensa.org/>

Local Secretary's Message

This summer brings rising temperatures and rising tempers. Have we lost our ability to disagree civilly, to debate issues without resorting to “whataboutism” and name-calling? Reading Nancy Campbell’s RVC column shows that even Mensa is not immune to the struggle.



I see our Mensa group as a safe place to talk over important topics and share opinions. Without exception, every Mensan I’ve met has been polite and cordial, even when disagreeing. And the points raised in debate are usually well-documented, the conclusions well thought out. Let’s hold onto this uniquely valuable French Broad Mensa ethic.

Things are heating up.

Sharron Armel, Local Secretary
SharronArmel@gmail.com

Washington: The issue before us today is...Secretary Hamilton! Alexander! Get off the table and sit down!

Walmart’s requiring masks? I didn’t even know they required clothing!

Food for Thought

Last month, the new “MEDIC” Special Interest Group was announced. MEDIC stands for Mensans for Equality, Diversity, Inclusiveness, and Change, and the mission of this new SIG is to take deliberate action and offer tangible solutions to improve the experience of marginalized people within Mensa.

The article noted “Mensa is often thought of as a white organization.”

In a recent discussion among several FBM members, it was suggested that we share stories of our personal experiences in transitioning from exclusivity to inclusivity.

Do you have any recollection of 1954, when the Supreme Court made its decision on the *Brown v. Board of Education* case? What effect did that decision, and the states’ actions in the months and years following it, have on you, your parents, and your community?

We believe your fellow members will be interested in what you have to say, so please join us in sending your thoughts to the *BROADCAST*. You are, of course, welcome to share your story with your name, or anonymously.

Johanna Dokter and Sharron Armel

Well-Deserved Recognition for FBM Members

The July 2020 issue of "Rapid River Magazine" has a new section entitled "Arts and Culture." Mensan Artists *Grace Lehto* (pages 101-103) and *Michael Havelin* (pages 92-94) are featured.

Check it out at:

http://issues.rapidrivermagazine.com/books/xydk/mobile/index.html?fbclid=IwAR3lyzYeeAdNAqGxrvm_czZ2iegW5arIdIrv7KI036VG_gk0Xr4bcba-AMI#p=92

Regional Vice-Chairman's Message



This has been the busiest month since I started serving as RVC5, in spite of the fact that there can be no local group visits right now, because of the controversy about our Facebook Firehouse chat room. As you know, two members of the AMC proposed a motion to remove Hospitality and Firehouse from American Mensa's officially sanctioned forums. Between the Board of Directors' discussions on the matter and the numerous

letters both pro and con, I had to wade through about an hour and a half's worth of opinions each day for the past two weeks.

A little history: several years ago, because of complaints that many incendiary posts were occurring in the Facebook Hospitality chat room, the (then) AMC voted to divide Hospitality into two groups: Hospitality (moderated) and Firehouse (unmoderated.) I thought at the time, and still do, that the move was the right one. Predictably, Firehouse became even more objectionable as many hostile, rude, and <insert your favorite adjective here> posts began to appear. Many comments were racist, ageist, homophobic, and downright illegal. Some posts were vicious *ad hominem* attacks (directed against a person rather than the position they were maintaining.) Some doxing occurred (posting private or identifying information such as their address and phone number about a particular individual on the chat, typically with malicious intent.) Some members actually called the employers of other members and tried to get them fired! Obviously, something had to be done.

I genuinely wish that the AMC had chosen to approach Firehouse and enlist their assistance in blocking the worst of the infractions (no doxing, no personal threats, etc.) Instead, the motion morphed from removing Firehouse and Hospitality as official groups of American Mensa, to changing them into SIGs, to combining the motions into one, to setting up a committee to deal with the situation.

PRO considerations (remove American Mensa Firehouse and American Mensa Hospitality from American Mensa’s list of officially recognized forums): The existing forums are an embarrassment to American Mensa because of their freewheeling, occasionally illegal, conduct. American Mensa cannot afford them from a Risk Assessment standpoint, both financially in case of a lawsuit, and from a PR perspective. Many people think all Mensans are that rude/hostile/etc. when they encounter Firehouse, rather than seeing the situation as individuals who happen to belong to Mensa.

CON considerations (DON’T remove Firehouse, etc.): Firehouse has a warning label that it is unmoderated. Firehouse is a Monument to Freedom of Speech. No one is forced to go there, and no one is forced to stay. If Firehouse is not your cup of tea, don’t go there – go to Hospitality. If you don’t like someone’s posts, “block” them. A huge percentage of the CON emails said that Hospitality is boring, that they loved Firehouse – that it was “family” to them. One strong argument was that it was a terrible time to squelch Firehouse, since there are few in-person events during COVID and this online forum was beloved. Firehouse has more than 2,000 members. Somewhere between 75 and 100 post regularly.

The motion passed, eight for, five against, one abstention because a family member works at Facebook. The committee is being chosen as I type this. About 125 members watched this AMC meeting, an unprecedented number, showing the amount of interest in this issue.

I only hope the situation resolves itself amicably. I am still aghast at the way it unfolded.

Nancy Campbell, 704-533-3351 or RVC5mail@gmail.com



Mediocre-Okay Advice from Gabbie

Gabbie hears your woes, and offers advice. Send your quandaries to Gabbie c/o the BROADCAST Editor.



Dear Gabbie,

I need help! I've been trapped in Hell at home with four screaming demons... er, I mean children... for the past months and I don't think I can take much more. Are they going to open the schools so I can get rid of the little b...b...b... Well, you know what I mean... my little darlings. I'm going nuts here. Help!

A Desperate Parent

Dearest Despairing,

What are you asking me for? I'm no educator. They barely let me out of reform school when my time was up. Maybe that's what's needed: to lock the little buggers (that's the "B" word you meant, ain't it?) up somewhere and throw in some raw meat and peanut butter once a week. Let them work it out for themselves just like in "real" life. You need to ask the Governor what they're gonna do, But he won't be able to tell you anyway, 'cause every school district's got to figger it out theirself. It's gonna be pure anarchy, if the schools open at all. Luckily, our progeny will all be able to count to 20 if they take their shoes off.

And speaking of deficits, there's that "national guidance" deficit again. Where's "The Man" when we need him? Off beating up defenseless golf balls, or double dating with his pal Epstein (oh, wait a minute... he strangled himself while in protective custody), or having vodka toast and herring with his Russian handlers.

Gabbie goes on...

Actually, none of this really matters. COVID-19 is going to be around for a long time. And by the time COVIDS 20, 21 and 22 come along, our ignorant and vaccine-free little feral creatures will be running around in animal skins and dumpster diving for their sustenance. Ignorance is bliss, it's been said. Looks like there's gonna be lots of blissful people around if the next generation survives to maturity. Civilization? Wotzat? While you're waiting, why not mix up a big vat of Kool-Aid with some special additives?

Anything else you wanna know?

Your apocalyptic prognosticator,

Gabbie



Scholarship Winner

Wayne Stanko, Scholarship Chairman, reports that out of 56 entries, the winner of the \$600 Mensa Scholarship is Maxwell Gardner of Weaverville. FBM's first-round judges were Janis Durr, Grace Lehto, and Will McGuffin; the essays they selected went on to regional and national review before the scholarship winners were chosen. Gardner's winning essay:

When I began my career as an undergraduate at Duke University, I had a clear idea of what I wanted to do. During my high school years with limited resources, I spent hundreds of hours constructing three-dimensional paper replicas of rockets, lunar modules, and space shuttles. I wanted to convert my passion for spacecraft design and construction into a practical engineering career, so I decided to pursue a major in mechanical engineering and an aerospace engineering certificate. Solidifying my major early made planning my academic future easier. Freshman year, my advisor introduced me to Duke's 4+1 Master in Engineering program after hearing about my interest in graduate education. I organized my undergraduate class schedule in anticipation of the program, beginning by enrolling in math and engineering classes over my freshman summer with the intention of completing my undergraduate degree requirements early and in good standing. My grade point average in mechanical engineering courses of 3.82 and my overall grade point average of 3.78 are testimony to my enthusiasm and desire to continue my studies at the graduate level.

With Duke's professional Master of Engineering program in mind, I sought opportunities beyond the classroom to strengthen my group and leadership skills. In the spring of my freshman year, I began working for a VR lab using VR hardware, programming software, and giving demonstrations to students and faculty. In the fall of my sophomore year, my teamwork, leadership, and presentation skills combined in a spontaneous and inventive way at NC State University's inaugural VR Hackathon where a coworker and I took home best of show with our VR experience "Astrogaze" in which a virtual classroom teaches the user about constellations and then transports them outside to stargaze and outline constellations in the night sky. In the fall of my senior year, I

took on a second job at the Pratt Student Shop under Steven Earp where I have been learning and implementing practical engineering skills as a teaching assistant helping my fellow classmates to design and produce their metal/wood projects.

In the spring and summer of my sophomore year, I again challenged myself with an eye toward Duke's 4+1 Master degree program by taking a graduate engineering course while studying abroad. At the Technische Universität of Berlin, I took a graduate and undergraduate engineering course both taught in German. At the end of seven months in Germany, I was fluent in German through immersion both inside and outside the classroom and had completed the requirements for a minor degree in German.

My undergraduate education at Duke has provided me a solid foundation in mechanical engineering, teamwork, and leadership; however, in order to achieve my goals, I need business, management, and more in-depth technical skills. Discoveries are made and marketed through a collaborative interdisciplinary process. I want to create and market airplanes, rockets, drones, and spacecraft in a global marketplace. To that end, the 4+1 Master in Engineering program provides an industry-focused engineering education comprising technical, business, and management coursework centered around a practical internship. Real-world research is reflected in the coursework and gives students the opportunity to interact with faculty who have industry experience. This professional degree program produces experts in solving technical problems who can smoothly navigate global corporate environments. It is the launchpad for my career.

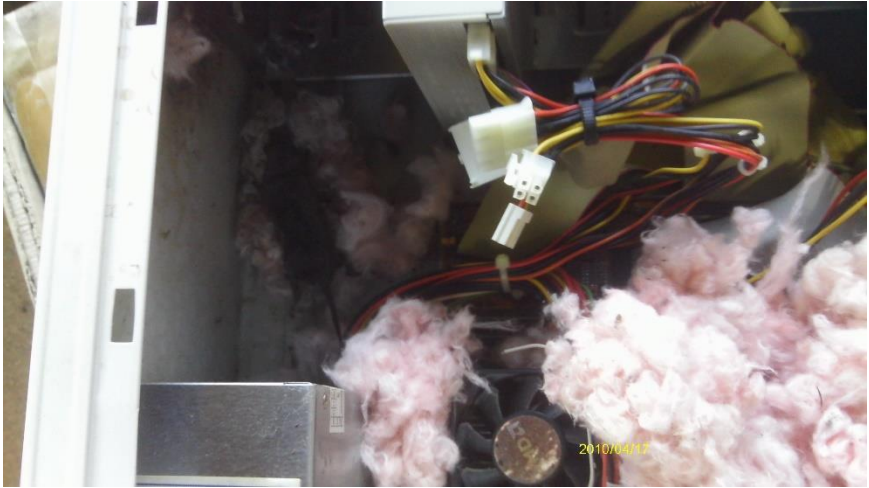
Maxwell Gardner

Essay topic for 2052?

Explain the role and use of humor as a coping mechanism during the CoVid-19 pandemic of 2020-2021.

The Surprise Gift

Look at what was inside a donated computer that was to be fixed up and given away!



“Dead or alive?”

“Dead and rotting and horribly stinking!”

This happened because they took out a board and did not cover the slot. Any hole in the computer will provide a home to something.

I have found the following things in computers:

- Mice
- DCon
- Bees
- Worms
- Flies
- Ladybugs
- Toys
- Nail Files
- Playing cards
- AND, the other worldwide web

Lizzz Russell

Getting Creative

Johanna Dokter has taken up “diamond painting” with some eye-catching results.



Too Much Free Time?

– by Josie

This morning I watched a video on what would happen if the earth plunged into Jupiter. The video covered everything—getting past the asteroid belt, getting past the 79 moons of Jupiter, what Jupiter would look like to earthlings as it filled the sky, what clothes you would have to wear for the hurdling, jumping off at Mars, etc.

I found myself wondering why would I even want to watch such a video?

Could it be that I have too much free time?

Here are my benchmark videos of what too much free time looks like to me (these 3 make up a set):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yq7G9Cx7pkw>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VzO3LXX_8sw

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1_eoX0xspQ

Another example of too much free time is that people are creating Lego versions of oh-so-many videos.

For example, here is the Lego version of the trailer for The Batman Movie:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZSQTvdF3QM>

But after careful thought, it is NOT a too-much-free-time thing, but rather my inner Campfire Girl (never was a scout) that always needs to prepare for whatever might be coming down the road, even if it is absurd. (Yes, I am proud to say I achieved the rank of Bluebird, which is equal to being a Brownie, only better.)

And so I say “Jupiter, bring it on!”

Executive Committee Report

The ExComm members and advisors (Sharron Armel, Michael Havelin, Grace Lehto, Will McGuffin, and Wayne Stanko) continue to confer as needed, via email and telephone, to maintain continuity in the group's activities. We agreed to go on meeting remotely until we agree it's safe to get together in person.

As most of the active members of our group are categorized as "at risk" due to age and/or health, we will continue to exercise great caution.

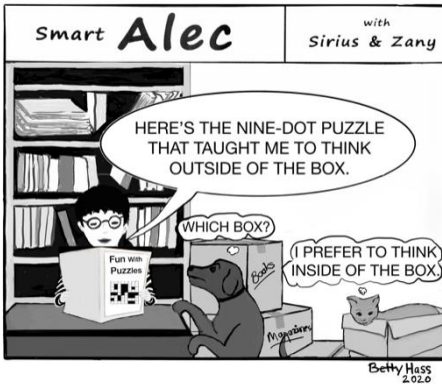
Submitted by
Grace Lehto
Deputy Local Secretary

You may suggest topics for future agendas by emailing SharronArmel@gmail.com .
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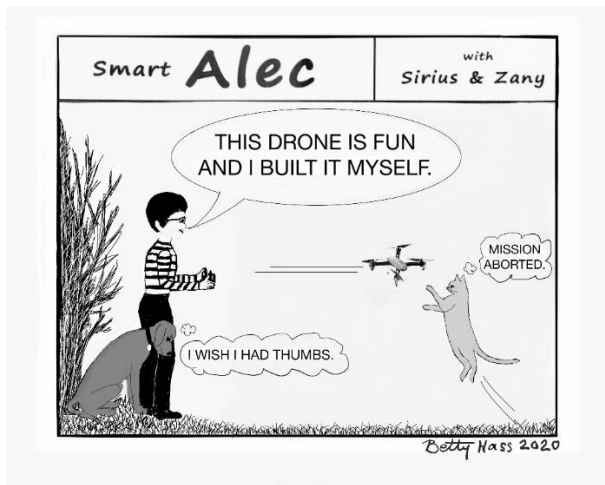
Treasurer's Report

Opening Balance at May 31, 2020.....	\$4,564.59
Receipts:	
Am. MENSA Monthly Subsidy	\$115.60
Total Receipts	\$115.60
Disbursements:	
None	
Total Disbursements	\$0.00
Closing Balance at June 30, 2020	\$4,680.19

Submitted by Wayne Stanko, Treasurer



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Membership Coordinator Position Open



BROADCAST

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