

## DAMNations 26: What's that all about?

...Beth Weiss

The flyer says “DAMNations 26” and “RG” and “Triskaideka Times Two”. How are you supposed to know if that’s something you’d be interested in? Those of us who are putting together the party have a great time, as do the 100-120 people who attend the Dayton RG every year. I’d like to fill in some of the pieces for those of you who’ve never attended Dayton Area Mensa’s biggest party of the year.

“RG” stands for “Regional Gathering.” Dayton Area Mensa is the name of our Local Group; we’re part of American Mensa’s Region 3, which includes Ohio, and parts of Michigan, Kentucky, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York. It’s called a Regional Gathering because it’s a big enough party for people all over the region to travel to. Actually, it’s a big enough party for people from all over to travel to – we often have attendees from beyond those states.

I’ve been asked “What exactly do you do at one of these Mensa weekends, anyway?” In a “two all beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese” sort of way, I could answer “talk, eat, laugh, learn new stuff, meet new people, play cards and board games, dance, eat, swim, soak in the hot tub”. And I can say it in less than two seconds. (“Eat” is in there twice on purpose, by the way.)

What if I slow down a bit, and flesh out all of those answers? Some people describe an RG as being like a convention, and there’s some truth to that. There are programs scheduled throughout the weekend. This year’s theme is Triskaideka Times Two—the program schedule is elsewhere in this newsletter, so I won’t repeat it here. That covers the organized “learn new stuff” part.

Registration for the RG includes food for the weekend – five meals, snacks, soda, beer, alcopops, and wine. There are “full” meals, not just snacks in the Hospitality areas. The snacks, on the other hand, are, well, just snacks; many are homemade; others are standard munchies. Hospitality is technically open 24 hours, but I will admit that after about 2:00 AM, not much is restocked until morning (unless you want it badly enough to do it yourself, of course). That covers the “eat” part.

The Dayton gathering always has a Games Room. The Games Room is also open 24 hours – and it is well-stocked with board games, card games, and probably some games you’ve never seen before. There are usually 4-8 people playing “rail games,” and a table or two of 8-10 people each playing Double Deck Go-Fish Cancellation Hearts (DDCH). Euchre is incredibly popular, and since I’ll be too busy to play, I won’t have a chance of winning the Friday night Euchre Tournament. There will be other tournaments throughout the weekend – a vocabulary quiz, Wizard, DDCH, True Greed...see the schedule for more.

I’ve met new people at every RG I’ve attended – some of those have been in Dayton, and some have been elsewhere. And some of those new people have become close friends. There’s no question that it’s hard to show up at an event where you don’t know people. But we’ll do our best to help. The volunteers at the Registration desk will be happy to introduce you to a few people and let you know what’s going on. If you wish, we’ll put a “First RG” sticker on your badge, so people will know you’re new and introduce themselves to you. You might want to plan to arrive around 6 pm Friday so you have time to register, find where everything is, and attend a program before dinner (which is included).

RG attendees tend to be very friendly and welcoming. I attend RGs out of town, so I’ll also share my favorite method of getting comfortable when I don’t know very many people. I

wander into the “Hospitality Prep” area. There’s usually a sign that says “If you enter, you’ve volunteered.” The people who are running the RG food are always looking for help – and I’ve found it’s a great way to meet people, as well as to contribute. There are often a half-dozen people in Hospitality Prep cutting things up or filling up trays or whatever. It’s enough like a kitchen that everyone starts chatting, and when I run into those people later in Hospitality or a program – I know them and feel more comfortable approaching them, since we’ve already worked together.

I hope you’ll think about joining us, or better yet, visit the website at <http://dayton.us.mensa.org> and register on line. We’re going to have a terrific time!

**Question:** What should I wear?

**Answer:** Anything you like, although most people dress casually—think jeans, but you can wear anything you’re comfortable in.

**Question:** What should I pack or bring?

**Answer:** You don’t really have to bring anything, but if you have a favorite game, feel free to bring it along. Bring a swimsuit if you’d like to go for a dip in the pool or hot tub.

**Question:** When do things start Saturday morning?

**Answer:** The continental breakfast (and the *coffee*) start at 8:00 am and the early risers are up and around. Programming starts at 10:30.

**Question:** How late do things go?

**Answer:** Some people stay up late enough to help with coffee in the morning; others turn in early. Programming goes until midnight both nights.

**Question:** Do I have to be there the whole weekend?

**Answer:** We’d love your company the whole weekend (\$70), but we have a Friday night rate (\$20), a Saturday all-day rate (\$45), and a Saturday night rate (\$25). Kids 5-16 are half price.