

From the RVC:

If you think this column sounds suspiciously familiar, there's a reason for that: this is a repeat of my December column from two years ago, but it is still timely and, in my opinion, bears repeating. The information about the Board meeting has been updated.

Well, here it is December again, and that means the annual Mensa scholarship competition is getting into full swing. If you (or someone close to you) should happen to be looking for tuition assistance at a college or university next fall, there's still time to get your entry in. The Mensa Foundation awards a number of scholarships in amounts up to \$1,000 for applicants who can write a persuasive short essay on the subject of why they deserve financial support in achieving their educational goals. All entries are sent to a central location, and then distributed to local groups for the initial round of judging. Most local groups have a scholarship chair who arranges a judging session for whatever essays are assigned to them, which may be entries from their own local area, or sometimes from a neighboring local group which doesn't participate in the program. The local scholarship chair begins by numbering each essay and then separating it from its cover sheet so they will all be anonymous (contest rules prohibit any identifying information on the essay itself). The local judges rank each essay according to a carefully-designed point system, and the winning entries are forwarded to a regional judging session. Many groups have a local scholarship fund from which they award additional scholarships. Here in North Texas, we have a separately-incorporated scholarship foundation which funds two \$1,000 scholarships each year.

While you're out buying stuff for Christmas, Chanukah, Kwanzaa, the Winter Solstice, or whatever holiday you choose to celebrate this time of year, I hope you'll set aside a little extra for the Mensa Foundation and/or your group's local scholarship program. Gifts to the Foundation are generally tax-deductible; gifts to your local program may or may not be, depending on the group. If you're feeling really generous, your accountant or tax attorney can tell you whether or not you can benefit from a major tax-deductible gift.

However, even if, like many of us, you are suffering from the ravages of the current economic downturn, and don't feel you can afford to contribute financially, you can still be of assistance to this worthwhile program. Call your local group's Scholarship Chair and volunteer to be a judge. The essays are occasionally moving, always interesting, and frequently hilarious. The judging is usually done in one afternoon, in the company of a dozen or more of your fellow Ms, and many people enjoy it so much that they come back year after year. If your group doesn't have a Scholarship Chair, you could volunteer to do the job yourself next year; complete instructions will be provided.

Whatever you decide, please accept my best wishes for a joyful holiday season and a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year. The Board of Directors will be meeting in West Palm Beach on December 7, and I hope to have some thought-provoking news for you next month.

Roger Durham