

I am writing this column after returning from a weekend long convention that is held in Houston, known as Comicpalooza. This is one of the many conventions that we have seen becoming more and more prevalent around the country, the most well-known (and largest) being San Diego Comic-Con.

Cons such as these are a fantastic way to advertise for Mensa. Many groups around the country have been using vendor booths at these cons to spread the word about Mensa and local testing opportunities. Gulf Coast Mensa did just this at Comicpalooza. Volunteers talked to hundreds of people about what Mensa is, gifted youth benefits, scholarships, and testing. If your local group is interested in hosting a recruiting booth and wants to know where to start, please feel free to reach out to me.

I have heard people use cons as an example when attempting to describe Regional Gatherings and the Annual Gathering to non-Mensans. While there are definitely similarities, there are also some key differences. As my father, who has attended more than his share of both Mensa Gatherings and cons, said, "Cons have great speakers and panels. A Gathering is a great party that happens to also have great speakers."

I had a fantastic time at Comicpalooza, but AGs and RGs are easily more fun in my experience. I believe that a lot of this is due to the sense of community that can be found at AGs and RGs. The community among Mensans is unique. Whether it's a discussion about a fascinating speaker's presentation, playing games until late at night, or simply laughter while sitting around a table in Hospitality, the personal connections made at Gatherings are one of the most valuable aspects of membership in this awesome organization.

The upcoming Annual Gathering will be held July 5-9, 2017 in Hollywood, FL. This is the largest opportunity to get to experience this community. You can find more details and register online at <http://ag.us.mensa.org>.

If you are looking for something a little closer to home, don't forget about LoneStaRG, Lone Star Mensa's Regional Gathering. LoneStaRG will be held September 1-4, 2017 in Round Rock, TX. You can find more information about LoneStaRG at <http://www.lonestarmensa.org/lonestarg-19.html>.

As always, I ask that if you have any questions, concerns, or general comments, please let me know. I have created a simple online form where members can offer feedback on any topic, both by name or anonymously. You can find this form at <http://tinyurl.com/AML-R6-Feedback>. Of course, if you prefer, you can always contact me via email at rvc6@us.mensa.org, phone at 512-779-3945, or snail mail at 10518 Horseshoe Bend Dr, Houston, TX 77064.

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