

# MENSAN FINDS SECULAR OASIS IN KANSAS CITY

MARK DIXON

As an atheist and a secular humanist, I've often felt like an outsider here in the conservative, religious Midwest. Regardless of your personal beliefs, as a fellow Mensan you may be able to relate to the challenge of being different yet trying to fit in. How do you find a place where you can be yourself while making meaningful connections with other people? That's what brought many of us to Mensa in the first place.

For several years, along with my fiancée and my son, I've been participating in local events hosted by atheist, skeptic, and free thought groups. Along the way, we've met some fantastic people, many of whom we now consider good friends. While these events are fun and often intellectually stimulating, what we've found missing is a true sense of community that extends beyond these gatherings.

That has changed for us since the launch of Kansas City Oasis a year ago. We heard about the founding of this unique organization just before it opened its doors. Helen Stringer, founder and Executive Director of the organization, was making the rounds at local events and promoting her desire to build a successful secular alternative to faith based organizations; a true community, but without the dogma and spirituality.

Building community is something that religious groups have learned to do well and there just wasn't a good option in Kansas City for the non-religious or those questioning their religion. My family and I jumped right in from the first day. We've been thrilled by how rapidly this group has grown and expanded beyond its weekly gatherings to include frequent social events and volunteer opportunities. *The Kansas City Star* did a feature story on Oasis recently.

The organization is patterned after a group founded in Houston a couple of years ago. Oasis groups are now forming in Dallas and Boston, too, in a decentralized Oasis Network.

The local group meets at 11:00 a.m. on Sundays at 1712 Main Street in the Crossroads Arts district. There's a keynote speaker each week, live music, and a "community moment" delivered by someone from the group. Show up at 10:30 for coffee and donuts. Upcoming events are posted on their website at [www.kcoasis.org](http://www.kcoasis.org) and on [Facebook](#) and [Meetup](#). On most Sundays there are about 175 people including kids in the free child care rooms. The group is already looking for a larger space.

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# BRAIN TEASER

DON MARTIN  
[kcdonmar@aol.com](mailto:kcdonmar@aol.com)  
816-305-0702

## March

Apparently the March teaser was trickier than its simplicity belied. If you'll recall, it went as follows: "What do the following words have in common? Beaten, Anyone, Benign, Foresee, Tootie, Foray, and Before."

There were eleven responders with three of them being correct. The majority of the responses correctly observed that all the words had parts which sounded like some of the numbers between 1 and 10. But there was more to it than those half answers. As one correct responder stated, "All of the words can be represented as a series of letters and numbers and clearly understood when that is read out loud." So, Beaten becomes B10; Anyone becomes NE1, Benign - B9, Foresee - 4C, Tootie - 2T, Foray - 4A, and Before - B4.

Congrats to Ray Malis, Donna Crosslin and David Blackwell. Enjoy your one-month foray into the limelight. Twitter account, anyone?

## April

A rather forward college student once asked his Mathematics 202 instructor her age. Of course, being a math devotee, she answered, "Today's date is my age, although before this week is over there will be another day with a date one fifth of the new age that I will be." What is the teacher's sign of the zodiac?

Send all responses to [kcdonmar@aol.com](mailto:kcdonmar@aol.com) or by calling 816-305-0702 on your telly via a trunk line. Responses must be received by the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month. Good Luck!

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People at Oasis are making new friends, forming strong bonds and supporting each other through life's ups and downs. One of the group's core values is that "people are more important than beliefs" and this is exactly the welcoming, positive community that my family and I have been looking for. I've already run into other Mensans there, so if it sounds like it might fill a need in your life, please visit KC Oasis online or drop by one of our events.