

LAWRENCE UNIVERSITY

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For immediate release

Great Midwest Trivia Contest returns to Lawrence University this weekend

APPLETON - The Great Midwest Trivia Contest returns to Lawrence University the weekend of Jan. 27-29 for the 58th consecutive year.

Open to teams on and off campus, the student-produced contest endures as one of Lawrence's most cherished traditions, a scavenger hunt of obscure information that has been ongoing since the spring of 1966. It will once again begin at 37 seconds past 10 p.m. Friday, the oddly specific starting time being one of numerous traditions baked into a contest that embraces its history while continuing to evolve each year.

The contest will be streamed on Twitch for the third consecutive year. The asking of last year's Super Garuda—the final question of the previous year's contest—will again open the trivia marathon, with this year's Super Garuda then closing the contest 50 hours later at midnight Sunday. In between, 300 questions and lots of chaos.

"I think it's just so both inherently Lawrentian and inherently unique," said Nick Mayerson, a senior government major from Oostburg, Wisconsin, who is serving as trivia headmaster (HM), leading the team of 12 trivia masters (TMs) in planning and executing the contest. "There is nothing like it in the world. You cannot say this has been done before or that I can find this somewhere else. You cannot. It is something that is so bizarre, and it has evolved every single year. In some ways it's a tradition, but it's also its own thing every single time. The common thread is the sort of love for trivia as a concept. But everything else evolves and I think that keeps it alive."

This year's contest, with pirates as a theme, will stream on Twitch with calls coming in via a phone server on Discord. Some traditional phones will be in the mix as well, with a rotating cast of volunteers on hand on the fourth floor of Briggs Hall to answer calls.

Mayerson said the contest's ongoing embrace of its history and traditions while remaining fluid enough to change with the times is what's kept it relevant all these years. Alumni continue to be passionate about playing, and past TMs and HMs have been generous with their support and ideas as Mayerson and his team have looked to put their own stamp on the contest.

The weekend trivia blitz annually draws between 500 and 800 players spread across roughly 80 off-campus teams and another 15 or so on-campus teams.

Where the contest was once mostly a wild scramble through reference books and other printed materials, it is now what Mayerson calls “an internet scavenger hunt.” Where once it was broadcast over the air on the campus radio station, it is now streamed, available worldwide. Yet, there is familiarity. The questions remain obscure and often strange. The prizes are still odd. The armadillo is still the de facto mascot. Sleep is still random.

“If it was the same thing it was 58 years ago, it wouldn’t still be going,” Mayerson said. “Even though it was probably pretty awesome 58 years ago.”

Mayerson said he came to be part of the trivia contest the same way many Lawrentians are drawn to it. He was a first-year student when others on campus started talking to him about joining a team. He played, he loved it, and by his sophomore year was auditioning to be a trivia master. He served as a TM for two years before being named this year’s headmaster.

The work the trivia team puts in is not unlike the preparations for a theater production, Mayerson said. It takes everyone pushing in the same direction, committed to the group goal. Then when the weekend finally arrives and the 50-hour marathon commences, pure joy amid the chaos.

“Seeing it all come together about 25 hours into the contest when everyone is exhausted and you’re still smiling and you’re still excited to be there, and even though it’s hard, there is still so much passion in the exhaustion,” he said. “That’s what I love about it.”

Need to know:

- [Registration for the Great Midwest Trivia Contest](#) takes places at 8 p.m. on the first night of the contest.
- Trivia 2023 will begin at 10:00:37 p.m. Jan. 27 and end around midnight on Jan. 29.
- The contest will be streamed live on Twitch at <https://www.twitch.tv/greatmidwesttrivia>.
- You can join the official Trivia 58 Discord server at <https://discord.gg/WTJaUhHb8p>.

Lawrence University is a liberal arts college located along the banks of the Fox River in Appleton, Wisconsin. Founded in 1847, Lawrence has an enrollment of about 1,500 students drawn from nearly every state and more than 40 countries. It features a college of arts and sciences and a conservatory of music, both annually ranked among the best in the nation.