BLAST! 2024 - Speaker Bios

Kathleen Stein-Smith - PhD, *Officier dans l'Ordre des Palmes académiques*, is a dedicated foreign language educator and advocate. She serves as Chair of the AATF (American Association of Teachers of French) Commission on Advocacy, an America's Languages Fellow, and as a member of the ATA Education and Pedagogy Committee and the MLA Delegate Assembly. She is also active in foreign language education associations, including the NECTFL Advisory Council, CSCTFL Advisory Council, and as a SCOLT sponsor. She has presented at numerous professional conferences at the state, regional, and national level, is the author of nine books and numerous articles about the foreign language deficit and the importance of multilingualism, has given a TEDx talk on the U.S. foreign language deficit, has been interviewed by press and radio, and maintains a blog, "Language Matters" https://kathleensteinsmith.wordpress.com/ She earned a Baccalauréat spécialisé and Maîtrise in Québec, where her master's thesis on the comparative stylistics of French and English was written under the direction of Jean-Louis Darbelnet. kathysteinsmith@gmail.com

Tom & Kelly Galanis - Tom and Kelly Galanis are a married power couple who enjoy learning and discovering all things that fascinate and bring wonder. Highly in tune with premonition, sensation, and higher power, they have focused their energies on intuition and empathy to help guide others with finding their destined path. They love to play and enjoy board and video games, acting, baking, learning, and discovering together, and they have done this for their entire 25+ years together.

Kimberly Strickland - Kimberly Strickland (Kimberly Lynn, Dr. K) is American Mensa's National Membership Officer and returns as Publicity Chair for BLAST! this year. She has previously served as RG Chair for the NNJ Virtual RGs in 2021 and 2022. She will be facilitating two sessions close to her heart this weekend -- Meet the AMC (and maybe run yourself) and Humorous Hats Happy Hour (H4). She started H4 on Zoom during Covid to bring members together for drinks and laughs in a virtual setting and is always happy to host it in person, especially alongside Bartender Ron. In her time not volunteering with Mensa, Kimberly teaches Global Marketing Management to MBA students, mentors job seekers with ASD, raises money for hemophilia awareness and research, and spends quiet time with her cat, Beans.

Lori Norris - Lori is currently Chair of American Mensa and sits on the International Board. Whenever she travels, she tries to squeeze in visits to local sights. Qualification - having an iPhone makes her a photojournalist, doesn't it.

Ron Norris - Ron Norris is a life member of Mensa who has lived in ten states and been active with four local Mensa groups. He's made hundreds of gallons of margaritas for over 20 RGs. He flew 3000 miles from Tacoma, Washington to be here with you. No matter how far he travels, he's still a "Jersey Boy" at heart. And don't forget: it's TAYLOR HAM.

Alli Meyer - "Alli has been an active member of Northern NJ Mensa for the past several years and a passionate student of enology and wine for much longer. With an advanced certificate from the Wine & Spirits Education Trust (WSET, Level III), a long stint as a marketing director for Winebow imports, and 20+ years of traveling to various wine regions, Alli brings a wealth of knowledge, a good bottle of wine, and a great deal of joy, to every glass she pours.

John Findura - Dr. John Findura does not pretend to know what is flying in our skies, he just knows that something is (as does the US government!). Follow along with John as he discusses the current state of ufology since the New York Times bombshell story in December of 2017 about Navy pilots

and the now famous "Tic Tac" incident. John will talk about the latest research and theories posited by Dr. Garry Nolan of Stanford and Dr. Avi Loeb of Harvard along with the thoughts of former CIA officers Jim Semivan and John Ramirez. The question is no longer "Are we alone?" It is now "Who is here with us?"

Laurie Thomas - Laurie Endicott Thomas is a freelance medical writer and the author of several books, including Not Trivial: How Studying the Traditional Liberal Arts Can Set You Free and Don't Feed the Narcissists: The Mythology and Science of Mental Health. www.nottrivialbook.com

Ian Strock - Ian Randal Strock (www.IanRandalStrock.com) is the owner and publisher of Fantastic Books (www.FantasticBooks.biz), formerly an editor at Asimov's Science Fiction magazine, Analog Science Fiction and Science Fact, Artemis Magazine, Baen Books, Science Fiction Chronicle, and many more. He is the author of "The Presidential Book of Lists" (Random House) and "Ranking the Vice Presidents" and "Ranking the First Ladies" (Carrel Books). His short fiction has appeared in Analog, Nature, and several anthologies. He is also the Secretary of American Mensa.

Joseph Hoffman – Dr. Joseph Hoffman received his medical training in Internal Medicine at Yale University School of Medicine, where he completed post-doctoral fellowships in Pulmonary Diseases and Critical Care Medicine, and later received training as a research fellow in Medical Oncology. Following appointments to the Yale faculty as an Associate Research Scientist and Attending Physician in the Yale Comprehensive Cancer Center Lung Cancer Unit, Dr. Hoffman joined Roche Pharmaceuticals as a clinical research physician. During his more than 20 years at Roche, Dr. Hoffman served in a number of senior leadership positions including Vice President of the Virology Pharma Development group during which time breakthrough therapies for human immunodeficiency, hepatitis C and influenza A viruses were approved for human use, and Global Head of Oncology Safety Sciences responsible for overseeing risk-management for the industry-leading Roche-Genentech Oncology portfolio. Since retiring from Roche-Genentech in 2013, Dr. Hoffman has served as a consultant to multiple pharmaceutical companies and has contributed to the evaluation of more than two dozen treatments for serious diseases including cancers, hepatic failure, anthrax infection, sarcoidosis and graft-versus-host disease.

Christophe Bommier – Christophe is the Chief Technology Officer & Group VP-Research at Mersen SA and is one of the few world's leading experts in the field of graphite. He has dedicated his career to research and innovation in the field of graphite and has accompanied all the 21st century technological innovations through his activity. Before Mersen, he was Engineer-Research & Development at Pechiney SA. and he received an undergraduate degree from École Supérieure de Physique et de Chimie de Paris.

Keith Thompson - Keith currently works for a Fortune 100 corporation as a Business Development Strategist. He held previous roles as the FP&A finance head for their US air transportation operations, and as an international tax / Transfer Pricing expert managing their Americas businesses . He's also a former senior economist specializing in Transfer Pricing with the U.S. Department of the Treasury, and a former adjunct economics professor with Ramapo College of New Jersey. He holds a couple graduate degrees from top universities, including Columbia University in New York. Finally, Keith is the author of a book that evaluates athletic performance, and ranks the top basketball players.

Gregg Siegel – Gregg is a freelance copywriter, short humor writer, former freelance joke writer for several late night shows and comedians, and a competitive performance punner. None of these activities utilize subliminal techniques. As far as you know.

Ken Light – Dr. Ken Light is a Senior Lecturer of Psychology at Barnard College of Columbia University in New York City. His research explores the complex relationship between effort and value in both mice and human subjects as well as the effect of new media (memes, TikTok) on cognition.

William Wallis – William is an attorney with the firm of Brandon J. Broderick, Attorney at Law. Attorney Wallis focused on employment law matters. After graduating from college, he was appointed Chief of Staff to a ranking member of the Florida House of Representatives, where he worked closely with his State Representative to draft, promote, and successfully pass into law statewide legislation. William is licensed to practice law in the states of New York and New Jersey. As a New York attorney, he advocated on behalf of sexual assault victims pursuant to the Child Victims Act, against counties and the State of New York (foster homes and orphanages), churches and other organizations. As a New Jersey attorney, he practiced family law, criminal law and personal injury law.

Mike Dross - Mike Dross is a passionate cryptocurrency investor and advocate who has been in the space since 2017. Mike has spent the past few years beetle testing his belief in Bitcoin and has emerged with a deeper understanding of its use case. He now dedicates part of his spare time to cryptocurrency education and advocacy.

David de Corlieu - David is a Bergen County native who keeps trying to escape his home state through increasingly desperate measures without success. He's worked in publishing and in finance technology and lived for long stretches in Amsterdam and Montréal, always finding himself inexplicably back in the Garden State. His latest cockamamie escape plan has involved enrolling as a (very non-traditional) first-year law student at Penn State this year.

Deb Stone - Deb has been an active member of Mensa for almost 38 years, including holding local positions, national positions including RVC1, Treasurer and Chair. She has run or helped run well over 30 RGs and also 3 AGs. She is currently a Trustee and VP of the Mensa Foundation. Her non-M life includes business consulting, real estate (investing & retail), involvement in a couple of start-ups, traveling, books, painting and poetry (to name a few things).

Lisa Maxwell – When not working as an Agile Coach, a musician and French horn teacher, a cat wrangler (Mocha, Max, and Jasmine), or mistress of the house, Lisa volunteers her time to our local NH Mensa chapter when and where needed.

Sarah Maurer – Sara grew up in a hunting, fishing, and camping family in Wisconsin. She has lived in Alaska for the past 27 years, and loves spending time in remote areas of the state.

Andrea Gallini Giarnieri – Andrea is a member of Central New Jersey Mensa. She hosts all manner of games and tournaments for M's, both online and in person.

Franck Mounier (whiskey) Franck is a whisky educator and consultant. He has a distillation diploma, is a Whisky Ambassador Tutor of Scotland, advanced certificate from the Wine & Spirits Education Trust (WSET, spirit Level III) and a judge to national and international whisky competitions. He has toured the world to visit more than 180 distilleries from Japan to the US, Scotland, and everything in between. He has entertained and educated more than 7,000 participants to date to his tastings and classes, and enjoys it immensely!

Franck Mounier (LDW): Franck is the President/LocSec of Northern New Jersey (Region 1) and is a 20-year Mensa member.. He is a Medical Doctor with an MBA and has a long track record as an executive leader in the pharmaceutical industry. He developed his leadership skills through different cultural environments in the US, Europe, Japan and Africa. He has led and validated many strategic plans during his career, constantly aiming at aligning all participants in the same direction to achieve the best synergy and efficiency, always creating a positive atmosphere.