

LAWRENCE UNIVERSITY

Appleton, Wisconsin

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For immediate release

APPLETON - The Great Midwest Trivia Contest arrives this weekend for the 57th consecutive year, built and nurtured by Lawrence University students with a passion for trivia traditions that date back more than five decades.

The student-produced contest will begin at 37 seconds past 10 p.m. Friday (Jan. 28), streamed on Twitch instead of broadcast on WLFM for the second consecutive year due to pandemic protocols. It will continue for 50 hours, ending at midnight Sunday.

The contest, open to teams on and off campus, arrives in the year in which [Lawrence is celebrating 175 years since its founding](#), giving added attention to the contest's placement among the university's most enduring traditions.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has forced some adjustments the past two years, most of the hallmarks of trivia weekend remain—ridiculously obscure questions, the oddly specific starting time, useless prizes, trivia T-shirts, armadillo sightings, and sleep deprivation, among others.

"Some things with the contest have changed, but some things, like the energy of it, are still very much the same," said senior Riley Newton, an economics major from Austin, Texas, and this year's trivia head master.

A dozen trivia masters will gather in Lawrence's Briggs Hall during the contest, allowing for greater social distancing than is possible in the WLFM studios. The contest will stream on Twitch with calls coming in via a phone server on Discord. Some traditional phones may be in the mix as well. Registration for the contest will open at 8 p.m. Friday.

Find the Great Midwest Trivia Contest here: www.twitch.tv/greatmidwesttrivia

The contest went fully digital last year because of the pandemic. It was a huge lift, done out of necessity and a deep desire to keep the contest and as many traditions as possible alive. Lessons learned are being put to use during this year's contest, which comes as the omicron variant continues to keep campus closed to the public. Last year's Twitch stream, for example, drew positive feedback, Newton said, in part because trivia players were able to see the questions instead of just hearing them on the broadcast. Some of those elements will likely remain part of future contests even after the pandemic recedes and WLFM, the student radio station, comes back in play.

But as the contest continues to evolve, it's the long-standing traditions that will still connect generations of trivia players—some here in Appleton, others participating from around the world.

"This is a Lawrence contest; it's a cornerstone of a lot of people's Lawrence experience," Newton said. "My Lawrence experience definitely would not be the same without having participated in this contest. It's going to be one of the fondest memories I have from my time here."

The contest was first held in the spring of 1966, the brainchild of student J.B. deRosset, who saw it as a needed distraction for a stressed-out student body. When he returned to campus in 2015 for the 50th anniversary of the contest, he said he never expected it to have a second year, let alone become a beloved undertaking for decades to come.

This year's 12 trivia masters, led by Newton, have been working hard the past few months to prepare a contest that is both steeped in tradition and nimble enough to change course on a moment's notice. That's the reality of these times.

"As wild as things are right now, last year was even more so in terms of turning the entire contest on its head," Newton said.