

Dondrite news

No 6 FEBRUARY 2021

NIJMEGEN

DEAR DONDRITES,

Happy Valentine's Month! Haha, yes you read it right. While nature gave us a spectacular snow fall and laid a white carpet for gentle walks, calendar bestowed us with valentine's week starting from rose day. Great many people looked forward and waited for the Valentine's day while some gardened sadness in their belly and yearned for a better time. One thing in common among all was to feel loved, today and ahead.

So, the Scribe committee expresses gratitude to all amazing souls following Dondrite newsletters and welcome the February starters with four amazing interview of interns of M.Sc. Cognitive Neuroscience, hilarious memes, dondrite picks of Netflix series and a crossword about Valentine's day. Have fun reading folks!

Cheers,
Scribe

Oh and don't forget our 'hidden hyperlinks'  clicking on things! This icon might help you:



FEBRUARY

CNS masters' second years

Experiences of Greg, Maaïke, Laura and Fernando

Greg is doing his internship in the intention and action group with Ivan Toni as PI. He actually had to search for the name because he did not even remember this tiny detail. At the moment he is involved in not one but two projects that share the same research topic: how can humans control instinctive emotional responses?

Well, you may be wondering why I can't even remember these details but I do know that both projects are super interesting! In my major project, we research by employing a novel fMRI sequence developed here at the Donders by David Norris and his lab. I don't want to get into the details because then this will turn into a very boring conversation, but unlike standard BOLD-based sequences, this one tries to track the changes in blood volume within arteries, thus it allows us to pick-up up-stream activation and sensibly reduces TE. Why do I need such fancy stuff? It is because we want to discover whether there is activation within the medial temporal lobe, specifically within the hippocampus, which is an area with strong signal drop-out, thus short TE= better images. In fact, I and Ivan think that the hippocampus might be a structure that is involved within the emotion control network, although the literature has not found any evidence for it (but who knows, maybe the Italians will).

The other project is MEG-based and it is conducted with the supervision of both Ivan and Bob Bramson. Within such a project, we are interested in observing the activation of the amygdala at MEG time resolution, and we aim to do so by 3D printing MEG head-casts that are tailored to perfectly fit the head of the subject, so that he/she cannot move. Will subcortical MEG work? Who knows for certain, but there is good probability that it will, and it is extremely cool in my opinion, so why not?

“Maybe I become a priest or a porn actor, no need to make too many plans”

Wauw, you must be very busy! As a second years student you are also taking courses besides working on your thesis, how do you cope with that?

Well, first semester for PAC (my track) is always super chill and I only had motor-control, so it was not bad at all. Meanwhile, I also followed a course about Auditory Perception (for fun) and another one about Linear Mixed Models (for my internship), but it did not give the exams/assignments, so it was super chill. The second semester I am taking Haemo, Academic Writing, and Neurophilosophy, and I would say they are chill, although I am too busy with my internship to actually follow them well. I'd say if you can do Neurophilosophy in your 1st year and you have a topic on which to write the essay, just do it

because that makes the 2nd semester of the 2nd year way easier. However, it is very hard to generalise from one internship to the other, because each internship is very different, therefore the load of things you have to do really changes among people and throughout the year. Sometimes is nice and doable such as it was for me in the 1st semester, and sometimes it becomes hard keeping up with everything, such as my current situation. However, I'd say don't worry if you cannot finish all your courses in your first year, generally is fine following SOME courses during your internship, just make sure they are some courses and not a lot, because then yes, you are in hell.

Good point Greg! Besides study-related stuff, what is something you look forward to?

Holidays. Definitely holidays. Don't take me wrong, I really like this master and this internship, but I have never expected this level of stress, and I consider myself a very chill “go-with-the-flow” kind of guy. This internship has definitely shown me sides of myself I did not know, and that is positive in the end, since I am reaching a better understanding of myself and of my limits. I am also looking forward to working on the MEG project and learning how to analyse MEG data.

Okay, so a holiday is all you need then. You will get a big one after graduation. Speaking about that, what are your plans once you're graduated?

At the moment I would say anything but a PhD. I would even do sex work if it allows me to avoid doing a PhD right after the master. So, my plan at the moment is to make some kind of money in the short-term, hopefully in the world of research (e.g., RA?) but otherwise even being a waiter is fine. I want the money not because I am greedy, but because I want to go to South America to visit that side of the world and seeing the family and friends that live there. Aside from this Latino adventure, I have not decided yet. Most likely knowing myself I will try to get a PhD (I know I am contradicting what I just said few lines above but bear with me). I say this because in the end I like the research life-style (the freedom, the innovation, the cool people you meet, the knowledge you gain, etc.) and I would like to do something related to teaching as well, but I don't think I have the patience of dealing with either children or teenagers. Moreover, I don't know what other option I could do if I have to be honest. However, whenever people ask me, I always reply: “we will only know by living” (lo scopriremo solo vivendo - L. Battisti). Therefore, who knows, maybe I become a priest or a porn actor, no need to make too many plans, let's do it one step at the time.

I call that bluff Greg, but it would be very funny if Arno shows the jobs of his former students including you as a priest or porn actor. We'll see, thank you for this amazing interview!

Currently, Maaike is doing her internship in the lab Systems Neurology, led by Rick Helmich. In the project, they are looking at Parkinson's patients with tremor, and how this tremor is affected by stress.

This sounds super cool Maaike, how exactly are you investigating that?

Well, we're having patients do a stressful task inside the MRI scanner, once after taking a beta-blocker (propranolol), which influences the stress system, and once after taking a placebo. Stress usually increases the tremor, and we want to see if this medication influences the effect of stress on the tremor and tremor-related activity in the brain.

Sounds very interesting. Also interesting, especially for first years, how did you end up in this lab and with this project? During the internshipmarket there was this thing where you could talk to different researchers about their projects. There I talked to the PhD in charge of this project. You were supposed to talk for a few minutes and then move to the next project, but I think we ended up talking about the project for like 20 minutes. I first did a lab rotation here and then stayed for my internship.

We also asked other students, but you're probably still following some courses in addition to your internship. We are wondering how you manage that.

I finished all my courses in my first year so I'm not doing any courses now.

“Luckily everyone in the lab is always happy to help with any problems and answer any questions.”



“You were supposed to talk for a few minutes, but we ended up talking about the project for like 20 minutes .”

Wow, that's very impressive, great job! All your focus is directed to your thesis. Are there any specific things you hope to learn? I hope to get a lot of experience with performing experiments and with analysing data. Something I like a lot about this project is that there's a lot of different types of data that I get to record and analyse, such as (task) MRI, EMG, behavioural data, and physiological data (like pupil, heart rate, and respiration). It's quite difficult, but also a really valuable learning experience. Luckily, everyone in the lab is always happy to help with any problems and answer any questions. It's also very nice to do research on a patient group, as it's quite different from doing experiments on for example students. We spend a full day together while doing all the measurements, so you get to talk and hear their stories, which is always really interesting and insightful.

Your lab sounds very close! It sounds like you're in the right place. Is there still something you are looking forward to?

I'm really looking forward to the debinding. The study is double-blind, so we don't know when the participant gets the propranolol and when they get the placebo. After all the measurements have been performed, we're going to do the debinding, and we'll finally know when they got which. Then I can finally look at the most important and interesting part of my thesis: what the influence of the medication is.

Oeh, that' is really something to look forward to, very exciting. You may let us know once you've answered that question! One last question, what are your plans after CNS?

I'll let you know when I know.

Hihi okay, we'll keep in touch, thank you Maaike and have fun with the debinding!

Laura is currently doing her internship in the Sleep & Memory lab from Dr. Martin Dresler, where she is gathering as much pre-existing sleep data as possible to make one big database with a huge sample size. This data is then being used to analyze the influence of the lunar cycle on sleep. Besides this interesting and time-consuming task, Laura is also assisting others in the lab to acquire sleep data in order to gain more experience. You are probably wondering how she ended up at this amazing internship position and Laura is happy to tell you that!

When starting the CNS master I had two fields of interest: sleep and multilingualism. I decided to start with the P&M track rather than the language one because I found the courses more interesting and I felt like what I found interesting about language was still represented in the P&M track (mostly the switching between languages). In December of my first year I did my first lab rotation in Martin Dresler's lab after talking to a peer (shoutout to Emma Peters hihi) who was already involved in the lab. I had such a great time and immediately felt very welcomed there. My second lab rotation I did in the field of multilingualism which was also nice although I personally preferred the atmosphere of my first lab rotation. As I also did not have any of my elective language courses yet, I felt less submerged in the field of language. It is at that time that Emma told me Martin was open to me doing my thesis there. After a bit of thinking I decided I liked both the topic of sleep a lot and the lab, so there was nothing stopping me. Looking back I am so happy that I made that decision because a week later we had Covid-19 starting and it would have become a more stressful process.

Sounds like the perfect lab for you! Is there something you would really like to learn in this lab?

In my opinion working in science (and even going through life) is basically problem-solving. Being good at accepting a problem, assessing it and trying to look at different options in order to find a solution for it is something useful in any field of study or life in general and it is something you really get to deal with in your internship. It is another step in the direction of being able to conduct research in a more independent way. I also hope to get some practice with methods like EEG, MRI, and sleep scoring.

Gaining skills to solve problems properly is definitely something many of us would like to learn! Besides learning how to solve problems like a pro, what is something you are looking forward to?

I am very happy with all the lessons I have learned being in this master and I feel ready to be done with it and start something new (almost). I think the most important thing is to be open to opportunities and then take them and put in all the effort you got once they arrive. And that is what I plan on doing now and forever I guess. So to answer the question, I am looking forward to welcome whatever opportunity comes on my path.

“Trusting the process will lead to new things that will in the end turn into being fine even if it doesn't always seem to go well within the process.”

That sounds wonderful! There is going to be a moment when you have to leave the beautiful CNS master behind and move on. Do you already have plans for the future?

An example of an opportunity is immediately what I will maybe be doing next year. Originally I had planned to start a research assistantship after the master before rushing into a PhD. I feel like a lot of people in the program perceive a lot of pressure to be starting a PhD after they are done, which could turn into bad choices. Therefore, I was planning to take a year to develop without all the pressure of having to find a PhD during my internship and also to avoid rolling from one stressful program into the next. However, an opportunity came up and I grabbed it. During Trends in the first year I developed this research idea to apply transcranial ultrasound stimulation (TUS) in sleep research when we had a class about it. At the time I sort of put it to the back of my mind because the method is still so new. However, when attending a workshop about TUS again, I was reminded of this idea and I decided to just pursue the interest (with the idea of maybe getting a research assistantship out of it). I contacted Til Ole Bergmann's lab in Mainz (Germany) about this idea because he was mentioned in the workshop as someone working with brain stimulation in sleep and he was very excited. Now I am working on finding a stipend and I hope to be starting my PhD there next year to develop the idea I came up with in Trends. I really hope that this does NOT trigger you to immediately feel the above mentioned pressure of “damn should I also already be applying for stuff etc”. Because my message is truly that of believe in that everything will be fine, open yourself up to opportunities and they will come and then be ready to work your ass off to grab those opportunities and make them into reality.

Thank you Laura for these inspiring words and great interview! To close off, is there any advise you want to give your fellow students?

The reason that I shared this whole process is because I know that each and every one of you reading this has all it takes to do exactly this and more (aka to go through the program and find a good future position etc.), otherwise you would not be here in the first place. So I hope it reassures you that trusting the process will lead to new things that will in the end turn into being fine even if it doesn't always seem to go well within the process. A lot of the pressure that I talked about seems to come from the idea that you have to be working all the time and already be doing all sorts of things. In the end you do not HAVE to do anything and you CAN do great things while also having a nice social life and enjoying it in the meantime. So yeah, I hope I can be an example for that to motivate you and good luck with the process!

Fernando is doing his internship at the artificial intelligence lab under the supervision of Linda Geerligs. His lab is interested in understanding inter-individual differences in the brain across the lifespan by clustering individuals based on their brain activity when they perform a fMRI task. The aim of his internship is to understand how distinct brain activity profiles between subgroups of individuals relate to cognitive performance and brain structure.

That sounds super interesting! How did you end up in this interesting lab?

Having a background in neuropsychology have always been interested in the field of Dementia and cognitive aging, so I knew more or less what I wanted to dedicate during my stay in Nijmegen. I found Linda during the internship market that was offered in 2019, she explained her line of research and the topics she was interested in and I guess that right away she convinced me to be part of the lab and start my internship with her.

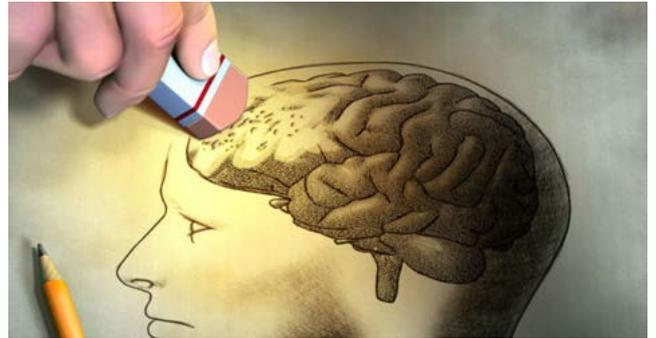
You seem very busy with your internship. But, life is not all about finishing your internship, how do you manage to still follow courses in addition to your internship?

During the first year the master is quite intense curriculum wise, but in the second year the trend changes. During the second year you are almost finished with the mandatory courses etc., so the load of courses is way less. Also, I have been very lucky with my supervisor because she always helps me when I get stuck or when I need guidance, so that makes everything easier.

It is amazing that you have a supervisor that helps you at any time. I imagine that this allows you to learn many things during the months in this lab. What is something you really hope to learn and what do you look forward to?

During my internship I expect that at the end I can feel more confidence analyzing data and be more independent in terms of understanding the different methods used to work with fMRI data. One of the things that I'm looking forward to is to be involved in a clinical study about dementia. I think that research on biomarkers that can inform us about healthy aging are going to have a huge impact in the future.

“I have found so many different people with so many backgrounds working towards the same direction, namely understanding the brain.”



Great to hear that you have many goals to achieve during your internship. However, in a few months your internship will come to an end. Have you already thought about what you want to do after graduating?

Honestly I can't answer you with certainty to that question because I don't really know myself. I don't want to be rushed to take the next decision. I want to continue with this line of research, I guess that I'll have to wait until opportunity arises.

I hope the perfect opportunity will arise for you eventually and I am sure you will end up somewhere you will be satisfied with! We have one last question, what is something you really want to tell your fellow CNS students?

Something I would like to tell is about how great is the student community around CNS. I have found so many different people with so many backgrounds working towards the same direction (understanding the brain). Also the people I have surrounded with these two years are really great and has become my best friends in these difficult times.

That is amazing to hear! Thank you very much for your interview Fernando, I am sure you inspired many students to continue working towards that specific goal we all have: understanding the brain!

“Research on biomarkers that can inform us about healthy aging are going to have huge impact in the future.”

A WORD FROM THE BOARD

Dear Dondrites,

The past month was a busy one for the board. Not only did we have to deal with our exams (I'm sure Nele can tell you how happy she was with her ambitious course plan), internship struggles (how about reprogramming your first pilot for the third time, or feeling lost in all the new programs to do put your study online), we have also been busy with lots of Dondrite stuff!

First, we celebrated Dondrite's fourth birthday. As you all (should) know, the 31st of January is an important day for Dondrite. We managed to celebrate it well, with a board-only activity, an all-board activity, and of course an activity for you our most valued Dondrite members. First we took some wonderful board pictures with Nele, Eline, and Brittany. It was really nice to see each other in real life again, though we still could not take cheesy board pictures where we show how connected we are by holding hands or shoulders or what not. Then it was time to entertain our founders and previous board members by presenting them with a very nice Dondrite Pubquiz! We shared lots of lols, stories, and formally introduced Nele and Brittany to all the former board members. The next day we held a cake drive through so each of you could consume your love for Dondrite :) . That evening you could participate in the Dondrite pubquiz V2, a (improved) version of the one we gave for the old boards. All in all, it was a great success.

Second, we were able to welcome a new batch of enthusiastic CNS students, the new February starters! As with the September starters you are mostly digital virtual characters but we hope to organise events to meet the physical aspects of your personhoods as well. The travel committee is working hard to organise walk-togethers soon, so keep an eye out for that! In the meantime, you can let your thoughts wander freely in the café philosophique or get to know new sides of your fellow students by talking to them in foreign language in the language cafes, to name just a few of the activities Dondrite organises.

Third, we are busy as every working behind the scenes to keep Dondrite functioning as well as we can. Brittany has worked wonders on the website (go check it out! It's dondrite.nl) and we will be starting up a new buddy system so we don't have to feel as lost in this mostly online studying world. This ends the short recap of what we have done in the past few weeks, but if you want to hear more be sure to hit us up, you can always find us in one of the seven (hundred) CNS chats or as always send emails about whatever.

Cheers and enjoy the start of fresh, new and exciting courses!

Best wishes on behalf of the Board,
Jochem



RECENT DONDRITE EVENTS

February introduction activities

We welcomed the new February starters during several introductory activities. First, a pub-quiz was organised and later the studentes were able to show their escape skills during an online escape room!

We hope the February starters feel very welcome and will join many other activities in the future



Relaxation activity

At the 25th of January, a relaxation activity was organised so students could get their mind off studying a bit. This time, students were able to show how sporty they were during the sport activity!

Dondrite's birthday party

Our beautiful study association celebrated its 4th birthday on January 31st with a real cake drive-through. After enjoying this delicious treat, a fun pub-quiz was organised on the first of February to celebrate the birthday even more.

Online board game night

Like every month, an online board game night was organised, during which people can chat, play games and just get to know each other.

Meet the committees

On February 9th, new and old CNS students were able to meet all the fun committees and see which committee they would like to join. The event was hosted in Gathertown and was a great success!

Meet & speed dating

Since the February starters just joined the masters, an online meet and speed dating event was hosted on February 15th. Here, the new students were able to meet up and get to know each other better!

Weekly events

Café philosophique

The neurophilosophy course just started this semester, which gives us much inspiration to meet up and discuss neurophilosophic-related topics. Luckily, this fun and interesting event is organised every week on Wednesdays at 15:30.

Bitch coffee breaks

During the weekly bitch coffee breaks, students are able to complain about study and non-study related topics and just socialize with other students!



UPCOMING DONDRERS EVENTS

Language Workshop

23-02-21

Travel committee is organizing Portuguese language workshop on the 23rd of February at 20:00h



Ballet dance event

26-02-21

The activity committee is organizing a Ballet dance session. Take a moment to flex your body gracefully on 26th February at 20:00h.



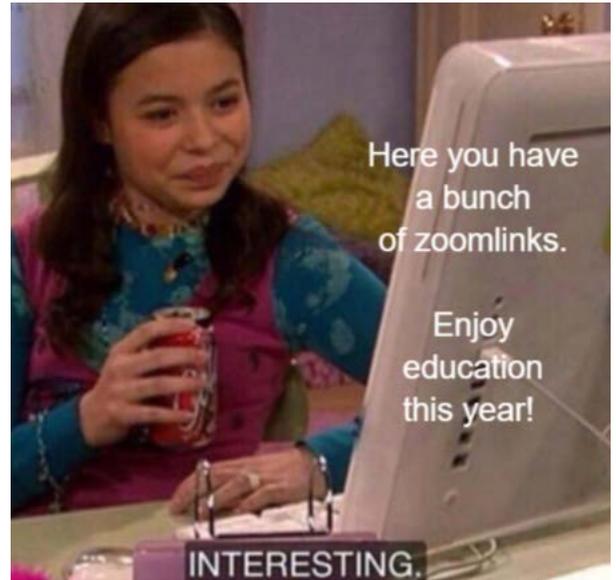
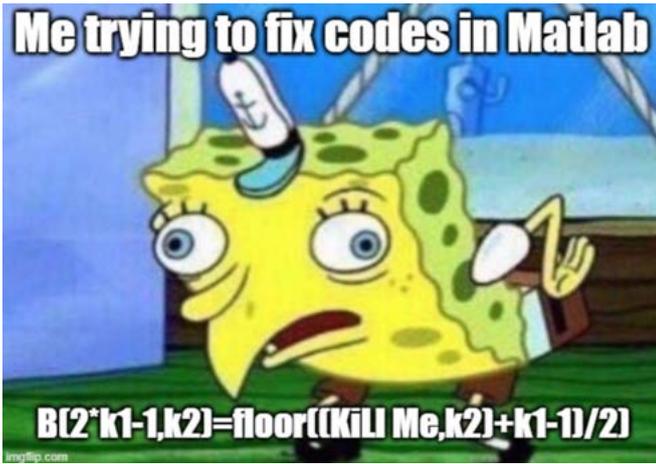
Time Management

04-03-21

The education Committee is organizing a time management interactive talk by Mariya Manahova on 3rd March at 15:30h

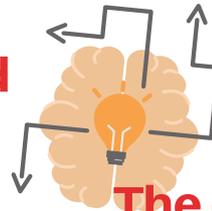


MONTHLY MEME



DONDRITE PICKS

The mind



The creative mind

Babies



Neuroscience Netflix series

(for leisure time)

Guide to meditation



Love on the spectrum

NOTICEBOARD

sign up

COMING SOON

New Dondrite merch!

Keep an eye on the Dondrite website and social media platforms.

DON'T FORGET

...to sign up to Dondrite and pay for your membership if you haven't done so yet!

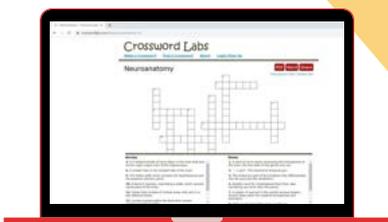
Do you have anything you want to share here? Send us your message at

scribedondrite@gmail.com

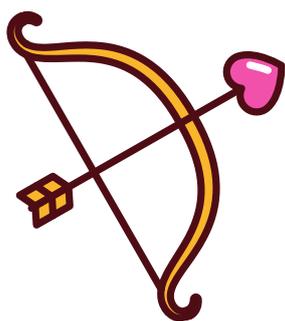
CROSSWORD

February is a month full of love. At the 14th of February we celebrate Valentine's day, at which we show love to our loved ones or confess love to our secret crush. This month's crossword is all about this beautiful holiday and hopefully reminds you that even in the hardest times, love will always be there! Enjoy this crossword and discover if you can come up with the right Valentine-related words.

<https://crosswordlabs.com/view/valentines-day-603>



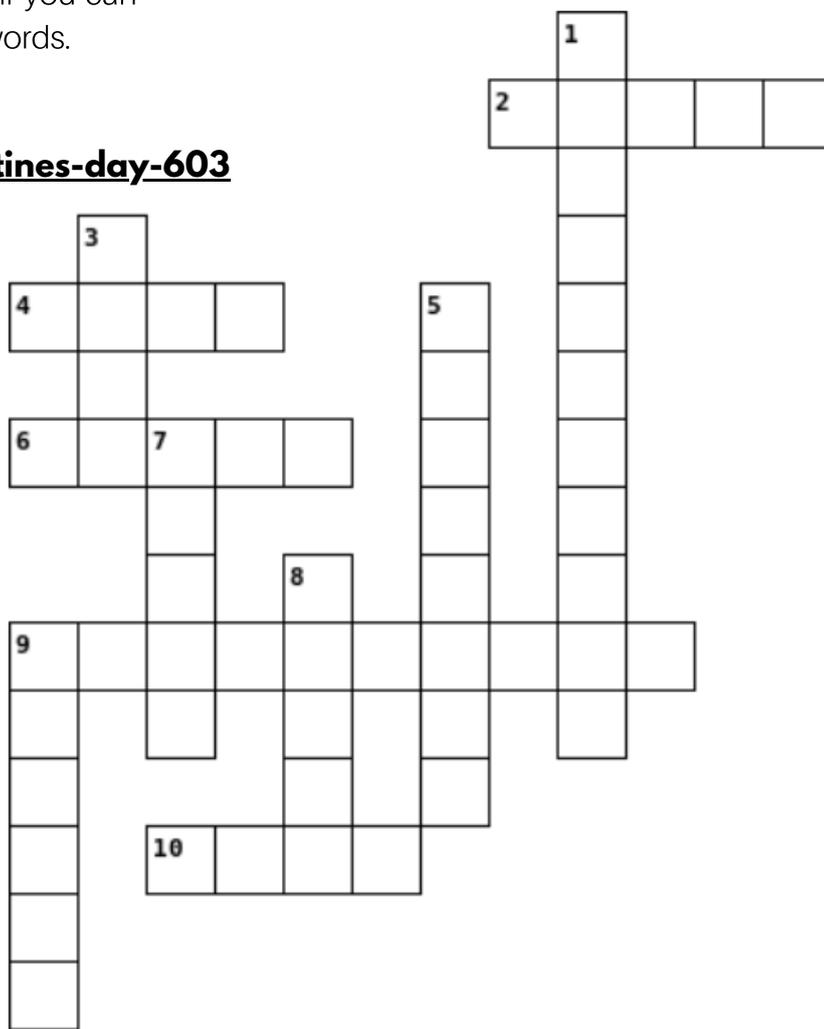
On the next page you will find the solution to last month's puzzle.



Across

- 2. God of love
- 4. A piece of writing to express your feelings
- 6. The symbol of love
- 9. Valentine's Day sweets
- 10. A touch with the lips

Valentine's Day

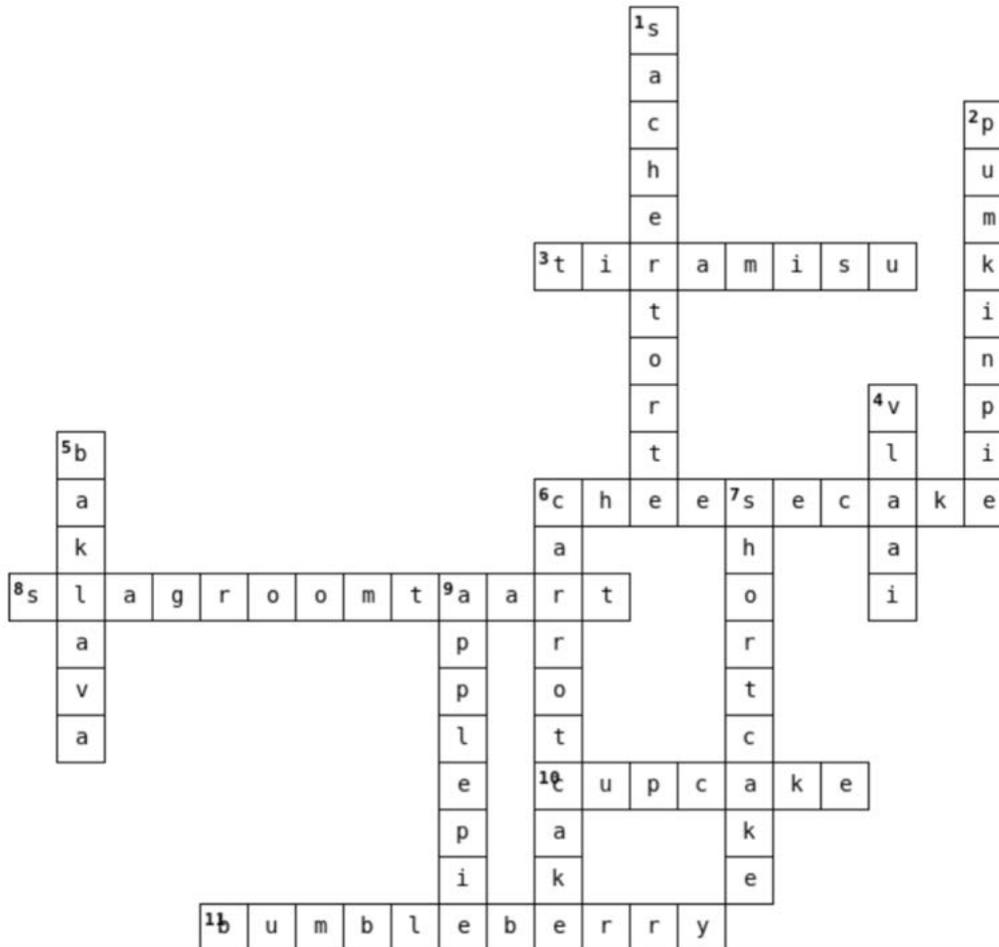


Down

- 1. If you're in love, you feel ... in your stomach
- 3. Cupid makes people fall in ...
- 5. In which month do we celebrate Valentine's Day?
- 7. What is being shot at people to make them fall in love?
- 8. Valentine's Day flowers with thorns
- 9. Synonym of hug

CROSSWORD solution

Pies



Down

1. Famous chocolate cake invented by Franz in Vienna
2. Classic Thanksgiving pie made of leftovers from Halloween
4. Pie consisting of pastry and fruit, associated with the Dutch province of Limburg
5. Sweet dessert made of filo, filled with nuts and sweets
6. Popular UK cake with cream cheese frosting on the top
7. Biscuitlike cake often topped with strawberries or caramel
9. Pie served with whipped cream

Across

3. Most famous Italian dessert with ladyfingers
6. Sweet cake with a bottom of crushed cookies, named after its main ingredient
8. Dutch fluffy pie made of whipped cream, topped with fruit and nuts
10. Individual sized small cake, usually served with sweet decorations
11. Canadian pie filled with all types of berries

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