

# Ask a Scientist

By Paula Eve Aspin

Why is the sky blue? Which came first, the chicken or the egg? Why don't animals talk? Questions like these often pop-up in passing but what if you want answers and you want them now? Where do you find a scientist when you need one? As luck would have it, you need only go to the Axis Cafe, 1201 8th Street at 16th Street, and join an enthralled and respectful audience similarly curious and questioning. Roughly once a month the Ask a Scientist lecture series, which was created by Juliana Gallin, a locally-grown graphic designer, meets at Axis and features a speaker giving a short presentation on an intriguing topic followed by a question and answer session.

At last month's Ask a Scientist event the topic was where did language come from? On the slightly raised stage Dr. Terrence Donovan, professor of Biological Anthropology and Linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley quickly presented a whole new world of information about language, accompanied by a power point presentation. It was like the best lecture you never had at university. The combination of sitting in a nice cafe, eating and drinking for

an hour with a like-minded group of people curious and eager to devour the offerings of the mentor on stage: it's quite an experience, particularly for those who have never studied the sciences.

At each Ask a Scientist event a guest expert discusses their hot off the lab table research. It's a stress-free environment in which to give your perhaps more typically unchallenged brain a bit of a workout. One hour at an Ask a Scientist session may prompt a quantum leap in a participant's personal development. Participation is easy and painless, excluding the warring, thesis-thieving, and backstabbing that may be going on in the halls of academia; which would also make a fascinating lecture for a future Ask a Scientist event.

Upcoming events include Phat Tuesday Physics Circus on February 5th, The 2,000-year-Old-Computer, on February 26, Ask a Scientist Pi Day Puzzle Party, March 14, and the Science of Baseball March 17. It's free but it is advisable to arrive about an hour before the event starts to get your food and drinks, if you so choose, and grab a good seat. 'No tests, grades, or pressure...just food, drinks, socializing and conversation about the universe's most fascinating mysteries.' For more information: [www.askascientistsf.com](http://www.askascientistsf.com).



Max Adler, 10-years-old, has his brain examined by Dr. Terrance Donovan at last month's Ask a Scientist event held at Axis Cafe. Photo by Paula Aspin.