



Matthew Mandell's April Fool's Fish

Poisson d'avril

April 1st used to be the first day of the year and it was celebrated much like now: people had parties with dancing and lots of food. In 1562, Pope Gregory changed the calendar in Europe, giving it 365 days, the number of days it takes the earth to go around the sun. The pope made January 1st the start of the year.

The French king was the first ruler to tell his people to use the new calendar. But it took many years for the news to travel around the country. During this time, many people still celebrated the New Year on April 1st. They were called fools, because they didn't use the new calendar. Others played tricks on them and called them "April Fools." They sent them on "fool's errands" or tried to make them believe something false was true. Sometimes, people even threw fish at the "April Fools."

Today, April 1st is called *Poisson d'avril* (April Fish) in France and children try to "place a fish" by taping paper cut-outs on people's backs. When a fish is discovered on somebody, the pranksters yell *Poisson d'avril!*

Matthew Mandell

Matthew Mandell (RTM District 1) tried to place a fish on the Water Rats last night. He sent us an April Fool's e-mail complaining because we used the Spanish word *posa* in a private message to swim team families:

This email was unacceptable for many reasons. But the use of the initials [*sic*] of my non profit's name, POSA steps over the line... I'd appreciate if you could have this post removed from their site and not have POSA used again in any way.

Posa means to place, as in place a Make Mahackeno Happen sign in the ground (which is why we used the word). It also is how Italians would say place a fish on someone's back, especially on April Fool's day.

Good one Matt! You had us going there for a minute. You had us hooked and were reeling us in. But we know you don't believe we were talking about you. Nudge, nudge, wink, wink.

After all, you are not the only person who uses the Italian word *posa*. It's also the acronym of the Police Officers Safety Association. And you wouldn't want to play a prank on them...