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Trivia contest drums up funds for Valley Medical Center burn unit

San Jose Q&A tested contestants' knowledge and brought in \$230,000



Valley Health Foundation CEO Michael Elliott, left, Janikke Klem of Heritage Bank of Commerce, center, and Mark Ritchie of Ritchie Commercial compete in the inaugural San Jose Q&A, a trivia fundraiser for the Michael Van Every Burn Fund, on Thursday, Oct. 17, 2024, at San Jose Stage Company. (Sal Pizarro/Bay Area News Group)



By **SAL PIZARRO** | spizarro@bayareanewsgroup.com | Bay Area News Group
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I unleashed my inner Alex Trebek on Thursday night as I played game show host for the inaugural San Jose Q&A, a trivia competition that raised more than \$230,000 to support the burn unit at Santa Clara Valley Medical Center.

"This money we raised will affect and save many lives, and we did it with a smile," said Michael Van Every, the president of Republic Urban Properties, who suffered severe burns as a child and received life-saving treatment at VMC.



He came up with the idea of having a "fun" fundraiser that wasn't the usual banquet dinner or auction and hit up some history-minded people to come up with questions about San Jose and Santa Clara County that would challenge the three contestants – Valley Health Foundation CEO Michael Elliott, Janikke Klem of Heritage Bank of Commerce and Mark Ritchie of Ritchie Commercial.

They actually did a great job coming up with answers. But the audience of nearly 200 people definitely let the contestants know about it when they answered incorrectly, as did the evening's "celebrity judge," former San Jose Mayor Tom McEnery, who made the call on close answers and injected some personality into the evening.

Klem was already in first place when she was the only one to correctly answer the final question – What was San Jose's first sister city? Answer: Okayama, Japan in 1957 – and took home bragging rights, along with a snazzy championship belt and a basket of wine.

But, as Van Every pointed out, the big winner was the burn unit at Valley Medical Center, which will be able to use those funds to help out more patients.