

St. Cloud's 50-hour trivia weekend marathon hits its stride in 40th year

[Jordyn Brown](#), Saint Cloud Times Published 3:24 p.m. CT Feb. 17, 2019

This year's theme for the 50-hour trivia event was "Trivia University," lining up with the event's 40th [anniversary](#) and the university's 150th. Jordyn Brown, jnbrown@stcloudtimes.com

ST. CLOUD — Question: What event is 50 hours long, yields a ceiling-high stack of empty pizza boxes and brings the St. Cloud area together for a marathon of random knowledge and excitement?

Answer: Trivia weekend at St. Cloud State University, of course!

This weekend the event rolled out strong for its 40th year — and with this anniversary lining up with the university's sesquicentennial this year, the theme was "Trivia University."

The event is put on my KVSC-FM, 88.1 radio, the university's station. Forty-seven teams participated in the 50-hour run of trivia that started Friday evening, and they varied in size and ferocity to take [home](#) the top spot by the end of Sunday.

According to KVSC Director of Operations Jim Gray, some teams run the weekend a little looser while others plan a tight, regimented schedule for sleeping, breaks and tagging in to answer the trivia questions.



Volunteers answer phones in the 44th hour of the 50-hour trivia weekend, Feb. 17, 2019 at St. Cloud State. (Photo 11: Jordyn Brown)

"They are almost rabid in their quest to be in the top," he said.

Jo McMullen-Boyer is KVSC's station manager. She said teams can have anywhere from five to 35 minutes to call in and answer a trivia question before it closes, so some of the more competitive teams have more people to trade off as the hours go on. These are the teams that often have more seasoned participants.

"It's all about stamina," she said. "It's about team planning: sleep breaks, going on until you crash and then coming back again."

But some teams this year were smaller and had younger participants. McMullen-Boyer said Apollo High School's knowledge bowl team participated this year, and another team — self-named "Julia Solo" — had just one 16-year-old girl on the roster.

"We have a lot of teams that have been around for a lot of years, so we're trying to [invigorate](#) younger teams to get into it," McMullen-Boyer said.

But Gray said the competition doesn't stop in St. Cloud.

"There are folks playing in London and Egypt and Korea," he said.



James Kantor sports a volunteer shirt while taking teams' answers at the 40th trivia weekend at St. Cloud State, Feb. 17, 2019. (Photo 11: Jordyn Brown)

This is a popular alumni event, and Gray said when a team has players at a "second base," the time change can be a real advantage when day turns to night and the group here at home starts to slump.

"It's the information treasure hunt," he said.

Bruce Petersen was one of about six or seven core question writers.

"This year we probably came up with more theme-related questions than we normally do," he said.

Typically about 30 percent of the questions are theme-related, he said, but this year with the theme drawing on information so close to home like SCSU's history, it leaned more toward 40 percent.

The higher-level questions are tricky to understand on the first read — they often call on obscure facts not found through a quick Google search, and some read as though they're nonsensical tongue twisters. It can be easy for a team to get lost if they're not paying close attention, and the question writers do this on purpose.

"We keep having to make things more difficult because (teams) just keep finding ways to get around it," Gray said.

Petersen said he knows from his past experience participating on a team people won't let anything get in the way of getting the answer. This can mean calling cross-country businesses for information or [tracking](#) down the home phone numbers of restaurant owners after hours.



Chris Sokoloski, phone supervisor in the forty-third hour, checks a trivia team's answer Feb. 17, 2019. (Photo11: Jordyn Brown)

"Teams are not afraid to make phone calls all over the world," Petersen said. "They're not afraid."

Just before 2 p.m. Sunday, team "Stefan's Dream" was in the top spot with 13,895 points, with team "It Just Doesn't Matter" close behind with 13,365 points.

These were some of the last scores posted before the "blackout" section of the competition, which were the final four hours when teams no longer knew where they ranked among others and raced to the finish. Final scores and winners were not yet available when this story went to print Sunday.

Send news tips to Jordyn Brown at jnbrown@stcloudtimes.com or follow her on Twitter @thejordynbrown