

Fireworks, feelings and family fun: Small Business Revolution concludes in Alton

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ALTON - As many as 2,500 people from across the Riverbend converged on the Liberty Bank Alton Amphitheater Friday night to enjoy the concluding ceremony of the Small Business Revolution.

The show, whose staff started visiting Alton six months ago, selected Alton as one of five finalists from a massive outpouring of suggested cities from across the country. Voters across the world chose Alton over Amesbury, Massachusetts, Martinez, California, Siloam Springs, Arkansas and Bastrop, Texas (all beautiful and charming towns) to be featured on the show, which airs on Hulu and features experts from the Minneapolis-based Deluxe Corporation assisting small businesses in reaching their next steps.

Since then, the show's staff and hosts, Amanda Brinkman and Ty Pennington, have worked with six local businesses: Sham Pooches, Bluff City Bait and Tackle, Lighthouse Sounds, Morrisson's Irish Pub, Today's Beauty Supply and Lovett's Restaurant, which will be featured on the show. They invested \$500,000 worth of assistance to these businesses as well as the City of Alton itself, which now has rope lighting downtown and an upcoming mural.

To conclude their time spent in Alton working with local businesses, a large party was held down at the amphitheater. After several beloved cover bands and local DJ Keith On Da Beat entertained the crowd, who mingled among several food and drink vendors

until the ceremony began at 9 p.m., Alton Mayor Brant Walker spoke about the show and introduced Pennington.





"This has been a great thing for Alton," Walker said following his remarks. "Deluxe and the Small Business Revolution came down here and saw what made Alton special - our small businesses, and really worked with us and them to help us all get to that next level. It was great - absolutely astounding."

Pennington took the stage and remarked on how special Alton was, adding he has been to small towns and large cities across the country and he will always remember Alton as sticking out among the crowd.

Today's Beauty Supply owner, Benjamin Golley, gave a rousing speech after Pennington in which he thanked the show and Deluxe as well as several Alton businesses who donated their labor and supplies to projects at his business suggested by the show, including RP Lumber for donating siding and Arrow Signs for their work with new signage.

Golley then spoke of love among Altonians, saying it was the force above all else binding the entire community together for their common causes. He concluded his words with the Lord's Prayer before giving the microphone to Brinkman.

Brinkman spoke about Alton's charm and how the city leads with its small businesses. She spoke about the businesses who did not receive assistance from the show, such as

Post Commons and It's Raining Zen, and also gave a shout-out to Jensen Fabrication for their work with materials and supplies.

Her speech concluded and fireworks were commenced from across the river.



After the party at the amphitheater, huge crowds of people descended upon Downtown Alton to enjoy the new lights on Third Street and celebrate with Morrisson's especially.

"Stringing Edison lights from building to building has been a goal for many years, so it's a dream come true to see them instantly creating an 'entertainment district' atmosphere," Alton Main Street Executive Director Sara McGibany said. "This was a massive undertaking that needed the cooperation of many people rallying for the common good, so we thank everyone for their willingness to make this happen."

The show will air this fall on Hulu.

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