

# Bubby and Sissy's owners host touching candlelight vigil in Alton to honor Orlando victims

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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**ALTON** - People in Alton and throughout the country awoke on Sunday to one of the most horrible crimes in American history when a man shot and killed 50 innocent people and wounded nearly the same amount in Orlando nightclub.

The gunman – 29-year-old **Omar Mateen** - started firing multiple shots early Sunday morning at Pulse, a well-known, openly gay establishment in Orlando, Fla.

**Jason Brooks**, bartender at **Bubby & Sissy's bar in Alton**, organized a candlelight vigil in the back area on Sunday night. He said inside his living room, he showcases a sign that says “All You Need Is Love,” a tribute to The Beatles' legendary song. He said today he looked and reflected at the sign and how important it is in situations like the Orlando mass shooting.

“I wanted to bring people together,” he said of the event at Bubby & Sissy's. I woke up to this and saw they were having one in St. Louis and I thought we should have a vigil here. We created an event on Facebook and it kept going and going. I



think working here, I learned so much about people coming together. We need to respect different cultures and treat each other with respect.”

**Michael Paynic**, who co-owns Bubby & Sissy’s with his sister, **Debbie**, led the group through the candlelight vigil. He credited Brooks with coming up with the idea for the event and said it was a good one.



“This really hardens your heart,” he said. “I have a very heavy heart right now for the families and victims and everyone out there. I doubt if everyone was completely gay, but it affected a lot of people and puts a lot of fear in people that this could happen anywhere. Our community here in Alton really has developed an open mind to all races and all lives. All lives matter and all walks of life come into our business. Everyone is equal in our eyes.”

Michael and his sister opened Bubby & Sissy’s in Alton in 2001.

Another in attendance who spoke at the gathering said people went to lift each other up and celebrate at Pulse. He said he was thankful to be in attendance to remember the people who lost their life.

"What struck it for me is one one of the mothers waiting outside in a police line to try to find out what happened," he said. "I just wanted to give her a hug."

**Alton Police Chief Jason Simmons** said what happened Sunday was a tragedy and no other word could explain it.

"I go to Orlando almost every year," he said. "It hits close to home to me. My son just recently got accepted to the Disney Internship Program. I was told 15 of the victims were in the Disney Internship Program. It scared me to death. Here in town, we want you to know you will all be well taken care of by the Alton Police Department. Our officers are all very well-trained. If you ever need any assistance, do not hesitate to contact us."

**Alton Mayor Brant Walker** spoke briefly at the gathering and when he started he asked for a moment of silence.

"I woke up this morning and turned on the news. It is funny how life changes in an instant. What we saw today was horrible. This is the largest mass shooting this country had ever faced. Alton is the city of Elijah P. Lovejoy who gave his life for liberty. Sen. Lyman Trumbull, who co-authored the 13th Amendment that freed the slaves, is from Alton. When we have fear, prejudice wins and hatred wins over love. This city of Alton was made on courage and not putting up with cowards like the one who committed the crime in Orlando today. Please keep all the people in Orlando in your thoughts and prayers. This is truly a tragic day for our nation."

Brooks said it is his belief that if people live to the motto of the famous Beatles song, “All You Need Is Love” everything else in life falls into place.

He urged people throughout Alton to continue to love one another to work through this terrible tragedy.







