

# Illinois-Made: Two local businesses receive state certification

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**ALTON** - Two local businesses were awarded "**Illinois Made**" certifications Tuesday afternoon.

**Mississippi Mud Pottery**, located at 310 E. Broadway, and **Old Bakery Beer Company**, located at 400 Landmarks Blvd., were given plaques and window decals designating their being highlighted as "**Illinois Makers**" through the state's recent Illinois Made Program.

**Director of the Illinois Office of Tourism Cory Jobe** said the program was a recent initiative, which started around a year ago. He said the initiative is a way to bring tourists to destinations across the state, especially small local businesses such as Mississippi Mud Pottery and Old Bakery Beer Company.

"It's part of the Illinois Made Program," he said. "It's a new program designed to inspire tourism through the eyes of Illinois entrepreneurs."

**Alton Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) Executive Director Brett Stawar** said the designations made by the state Tuesday afternoon resulted from the Alton CVB's nomination of the businesses. He said Mississippi Mud and Old Bakery were each nominated due to their contributions to Alton.

"Illinois Made started as a concept about a year ago," Stawar said. "We nominated these two. The **Illinois Office of Tourism** had to review them. This place had been an institution on Broadway for many years. Visitors and residents alike fall in love with this place, and take a piece of Alton with them."

**Chad Nelson**, who runs Mississippi Mud Pottery with his wife, **Felicia Breen**, said the business will celebrate a decade of operation on Oct. 20. Breen and Nelson craft all the pieces of pottery in-house. The mud is not from the Mississippi River, however. Nelson said a certain kind of clay must be used to ensure the finished products can be used for food serving.

"It's exciting," Nelson said about the designation. "I'm happy they actually got the Illinois Made Program together. It's really an honor to be picked."



Old Bakery Beer Company was a relatively new business when the Alton CVB nominated it for Illinois Made. Stawar said the business was chosen for reasons beyond just its beer.

"It's one of the few organically-certified craft beer makers around," Stawar said. "That's pretty big for us. A lot of their beer uses locally-sourced ingredients, and all of it is really good."

Jobe said the Alton CVB was one of 40 across the state nominating Illinois Makers. He said more than 60 locations across the state were awarded the distinction, including the **Marcoot Jersey Creamery in Greenville**, whose cheeses are sold across the state, including at **Grassroots Grocery**.

Following the first wave of Illinois Makers, Jobe said he hoped more and more locations can get designated in the future.

"It's important for tourism to work with small business owners," Jobe said. "I want to push more visitors to come to our state, and maybe turn a day trip into an overnight trip. It's all about the story, history and passion. We still want to find more makers across the state. We're looking into expand this as well, at no cost to the makers."

