

# The Unseen Stars Shine Brightest: Local organization promoting community

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer  
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**ALTON** - In the summer of 2015, Joe Moran decided to drop everything and follow his passions - by celebrating the passions of others.

And thus was born the Unseen Stars, an organization dedicated to promoting local businesses and outstanding individuals through short video series and campaigns. Moran joined forces with a camera operator, Josh Pippins of "Take It Home Productions" and decided to interview local artist Chris Day about his creative process.

That first video became one of many Moran and Pippins made to showcase the diverse local talent in the Riverbend area.

"I gave it a shot, and the video turned out great - too good for Facebook - so we decided to launch a website to host it," he recalled. "The name 'Unseen Stars' came from the

Today Show, when I saw all the talking heads feeding people info. Why does someone like Matt Lauer get to share his opinions on political matters, but everyday people don't? I learn a lot more from personal interactions with local people than I do from celebrities on TV."

Moran's second interview with Lewis and Clark Community College (LCCC) art professor Jim Price really nailed that objective, he said.

"Jim Price opened my eyes to a different world of how art speaks to people; not just with paintings, but also through film and how architecture speaks to people," Moran said.

The videos were hosted on the Unseen Stars's website instead of Facebook. The website was designed by Moran's friend Lauren Fester, who went on to found Launch Marketing Web Design. Some design work on videos is also done by Moran's friend Ian Whitmore.

Eventually, Moran and his crew moved past interviewing artists, and decided to go toe-to-toe against major corporate interests and box stores Moran perceives to be "ruining mom and pop shops." He said he was deeply inspired by people he knew as well as an interview with the band Wilco in the DVD, "Ashes of American Flags."

To combat the decline of local business culture, the Unseen Stars expanded to cover local businesses as well as artists. Moran said Halpin Music was one of their first customers, describing them as their "backbone." Moran said the crew has also done video work for Mississippi Mud Pottery, Piasa Body Art and Piasa Armory.

"Alton is great," Moran, a Brighton resident, said. "It's diverse, full of history and has a great location."

Ultimately, Moran hopes the work he is doing through Unseen Stars will contribute to the overall culture of Alton, maybe even helping to establish a "brand" for the area.

Included with the cost of a video 30 seconds to three minutes long is a b-side production, which Moran described as a second video "on the house." He also said further videos, including possible series, are discounted following the first video production.

Moran is looking to expand his service to more businesses and even partner with local media outlets to continue building bridges within the community, and bridges outward to nearby communities such as Edwardsville, Belleville, St. Charles and St. Louis.

More information can be found on the website as well as the Facebook page. Moran can also be reached directly at (618) 444-4799.

