



Why #MyAlton? An interview with Amanda Brinkman and Ty Pennington

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON - Yesterday was big for Alton.

The announcement the city had entered the top five towns to be showcased on the Deluxe Corporation's *Small Business Revolution* season three came bright and early - just after 6:30 a.m. After a large celebration at the Post Commons, Altonians immediately voted for their city, and encouraged all their friends and families to do the same. As of now, Alton is up against four other towns in a national vote. To leave the top 10, however, Alton had to make the grade to the show's production team, including Brinkman. What pushed it over the edge?

Riverbender.com interviewed Brinkman and this season's co-host, *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* host, Ty Pennington, to ask "why Alton?", and "what happens next?"

Brinkman said Alton was chosen based on "a very scientific method," which included spreadsheets and small businesses. Alton's local businesses, including Old Bakery Beer Company, Mississippi Mud Pottery, It's Raining Zen and Morrison's Irish Pub were all mentioned as reasons Alton was chosen alongside its reputation as one of the most haunted cities in America.

Pennington and Brinkman also agreed the amount of strong women business owners in Alton pushed toward a deciding factor as well.

The other towns chosen: Amesbury, Massachusetts, Bastrop, Texas, Martinez, California and Siloam Springs, Arkansas, all have one thing in common at least: natural and architectural beauty. Brinkman said that beauty was definitely a factor in the decision of who made the top five.

As for what happens next, Brinkman and Pennington said Alton should reach out to as many communities as possible. Besides voting once a day per email address, Altonians were told to reach out to members of the top 10 who did not advance as well as nearby communities, and even to St. Louis.

Pennington advised contacting the St. Louis Cardinals, and Brinkman said "maybe you should hang something from the Arch." While that may be impossible, or at least improbable, in the now seven days left to vote, the sentiment of getting the attention of St. Louis is not only viable - it may be vital to securing the win.

Season two of the show took as many as 350,000 votes to secure the show, Alton Main Street Executive Director Sara McGibany said Tuesday night at "What's Up, Downtown." Given the increasing popularity of the show, and the addition of

Pennington, McGibany and Stephanie Tate of the Alton Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) said to win, Alton may need as many as 500,000 votes.

Voting will take place until 7 p.m. Feb. 20, 2018. Tate said the show will call the city and say how it stands at least twice, with the first update being Thursday, Feb. 15. There will be no updates after Feb. 20, until the winning town is announced at a to-be-determined watch party on Feb. 27.

"It will be a very long eight days," Brinkman said Tuesday.

If Alton wins, businesses will be able to apply to be on the show, starting March 20, 2018. As many as six will be chosen, and \$500,000 will be invested in them to do marketing and improve the business. Brinkman said that money is divided between the businesses, and even to the city, based on need. Filming will continue through the spring and into the summer.

If Alton is not chosen, Deluxe Corporation will still host a small business workshop in the city sometime in April. That workshop will be awarded to each of the towns making the top 10.

You can vote for Alton [here](#).