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It's the final countdown: Man holding live stream voting drive for #MyAlton to be showcased on Small Business Revolution

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON - At 8 p.m. Tuesday night, the voting ends.

Since being named as one of the top five finalists for the Small Business Revolution's season three eight days ago, Altonians have been taking to social media, social networks and all sorts of media across the St. Louis Metro Area to get enough votes to push the town over the edge. As of Tuesday, the efforts have been working - as Alton has been

leading the pack with each update with Bastrop, Texas in second place, Amesbury, Massachusetts in third, Siloam Springs, Arkansas in fourth and Martinez, California trailing in fifth. While those numbers have not changed, a tradition from seasons one and two of the show dictates the town in the lead at the beginning of the last day has not won the honor of being showcased.

"We're hoping to buck that tradition this year, and push it to the end and win it," Riverbend Growth Association (RBGA) Interim President John Keller said.

Keller and Alton Conventions and Visitors Bureau (CVB) Executive Director Brett Stawar dropped by the Riverbender.com Community Center Tuesday afternoon to be a part of a live streaming voting drive hosted by local motivator and Jumpstarters founder Michael Gebben.



Gebben said he hosted a live stream of a voting drive Monday afternoon on his personal page, which lasted four hours. He intended on hosting an event of a similar length Tuesday at the community center, which is set to end at 8 p.m. when the voting officially stops.

"We had people from South Africa and the Philippines post they had voted yesterday," Gebben said of his live stream. "It's amazing to see people who may not have heard of

Alton 24 or 48 hours ago voting for the town just because of their love of personalities and small businesses.

If Alton wins the competition, Gebben said business owners across the community can use the win as leverage to get new opportunities and attract people to their location. While only six local businesses will be chosen if the city wins, those applying which are not picked could use that overall success to their advantage, he assured.

When asked about the confidence in that possible win, Stawar said he is optimistic.

“We really pulled out all the stops today, so we can finish strong,” he said.

Stawar and Keller listed several St. Louis area organizations working toward the common goal of bringing the Small Business Revolution to Alton, including Alton Memorial Hospital, OSF Healthcare, The St. Louis Regional Chamber of Commerce, and even a training meeting being held for Cisco Foods in Chicago with approximately 100 members.

Gebben said he would like other business and community leaders to come to the Riverbender.com Community Center and join him throughout the live broadcast, which is being sent through several local pages courtesy of Riverbender.com. He said he would have liked to host guests at his personal live stream Monday, but his dog barking would have interrupted.

Whatever town wins the distinction of being showcased as the town featured in Small Business Revolution season three will receive \$500,000 worth of investment and marketing from Deluxe Corporation – the sponsor of the show.

That money will be dispersed among the six businesses chosen from applications as well as the City of Alton itself. If Alton wins, businesses can apply to be featured on the show as of March 20, and filming will begin later in the spring and continue through the early summer, with updates in July and August of 2018.

“There will be a lot of people here disappointed if we don't win it,” Stawar said. “A lot of people have put a lot of work into it.”

The winning city will be announced next Tuesday, Feb. 27, at a watch party at Old Bakery Beer Company. Until then, there will be a week of not knowing, despite today being the last day for voting.

Voting can be done [here](#) anytime today before 8 p.m.

[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)