

IT'S A WINNER: #MyAlton: Alton takes the competition

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON - During a Facebook live stream event, hosts of *The Small Business Revolution*, a program airing on Hulu sponsored by the Deluxe Corporation, announced Alton had won a national vote to be showcased in season three of the show.

Hundreds were in attendance to hear the news Tuesday afternoon. When one of the hosts of the series - Amanda Brinkman - walked in the crowd broke out in near hysteria.

With tears in her eyes, she said the winner was Alton.

"Alton has rewritten its own history," Brinkman said. "The mayor was kidnapped, the community stood in the rain in a chain, you went live on Facebook and you won."

With this victory over Bastrop, Texas, Siloam Springs, Arkansas, Amesbury, Massachusetts, and Martinez, California, Alton will receive as much as \$500,000 in investments from Deluxe Corporation to be divided between six businesses and the city itself. That investment will go towards helping the business market itself - the specialty of Deluxe Corporation and *Small Business Revolution* host Brinkman, who made the announcement via Facebook with this season's co-host Ty Pennington. That live stream was displayed at a watch party held at Old Bakery Beer Company.

It was fitting for the watch party to be held at Old Bakery Beer Company because co-owner and manager Lauren Patton sought the nomination of Alton for season three of the show after watching season two on Hulu. She said the entire staff of the brewery sent emails to Deluxe Corporation before their head brewer received confirmation Alton made the top 20.

From there, Alton was chosen by Deluxe Corporation for the top 10. The production team of the *Small Business Revolution* toured the top 10 towns, selecting five to go to a national vote. Alton had been leading the pack throughout each update, breaking a former trend to maintain the lead to the very end.

"It's going to be hard to explain what this means to this community and the region," Alton Mayor Brant Walker said. "I don't know how you quantify what the marketing and promotions will mean to the community, but Alton is now recognized nationally as a leader in small business."

Sara McGibany, executive director of Alton Main Street, said: "I am so proud of the way our entire community pulled together in order to make this happen. I am over the moon right now. The enthusiasm was infectious. And we made a miracle happen."

Brett Stawar, president of the Greater Alton Convention and Visitor's Bureau, said: "We knew Alton had it together. This is unparalleled to anything we've seen before. It was nice to see St. Louis, the state and former residents get together for this. There's no going back."

Since Alton was chosen, small businesses will be able to send applications to the show as of March 6. Filming will begin later in the spring and continue through the summer, with updates coming after that to check on the progress of the six businesses chosen to be featured.

Even if businesses are not chosen, Jumpstarters founder and Alton watch party host Michael Gebben said the selection of Alton will give leverage to all businesses and the town itself when looking for outside investment and national attention.

A workshop open to all local businesses will also be hosted in Alton at a to-be-determined date. Each town in the top 10 receives that workshop.

Michael Gebben, one of the co-hosts of the RiverBender.com live broadcast at Old Bakery Beer, had a fitting conclusion for the event with these words: "Go Alton!"



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