

Who's on the list? Small Business Revolution returns to town for interviews, but no list has been announced at this time

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ALTON – Things have been relatively quiet on the *Small Business Revolution* front in Alton since the city was announced as the winner of a national vote to be showcased in season three of the show, which is sponsored by the Minneapolis-based Deluxe Corporation and airs on Hulu.

Lately, however, things are becoming more interesting with several area businesses saying they have met with and received emails from the staff of the show. These meetings and interviews seem to signify a bit of interest in several local businesses. Since the show opened applications from within 1.5 miles of the visitors center to the entire town, they have been inundated with nearly every local business seeking the show's assistance. Ultimately, the list will be whittled to six businesses. That list will be announced by *The Small Business Revolution* host Amanda Brinkman and this season's co-host, Ty Pennington, most famously known for his hosting role on *Extreme*

Makeover: Home Edition, at a city-wide party hosted March 23 outside Bluff City Grill on Broadway.

Initial investigation has uncovered a handful of local businesses who have been visited and contacted by the show's staff from across Alton. While no one has been told they are on a "short list," of 12-20 businesses originally set to be released yesterday, March 14, many have been asked about their schedules in regards to possible filming dates, and some have interviews Thursday afternoon with the show's staff to discuss their businesses.

According to an email sent to State Street Market co-owner Terri Ferguson Beaubien, the show has received more than 220 applications from Altonians, which is nearly every business license in town. The email sent to Beaubien stated this number is nearly double the amount the show received in season two. The email also stated interviews did not necessarily mean the business will be included on the show.

"If yours is one of the businesses on this list, this simply means we need to learn more about your business to see if you may qualify," the email stated. "If you are not on this list, it doesn't mean that you aren't going to be in our final group of businesses interviewed for the show. We met so many small business owners during our first two trips to town that we feel we have a good understanding of the needs in the community, but to be best informed in our decisions we have implemented this next step so we have enough information."

The email stated only 12 businesses will be selected to be interviewed on-camera during the week of March 20. Of those, six will be chosen and announced at the city-wide party on Broadway on March 23.

If chosen, Beaubien said State Street Market would use Deluxe Corporation's investment through the show for some of Deluxe Corporation's specialty of marketing and advertising.

"Now that we have four storefronts, we need to find a way to identify ourselves without confusing our potential guests," she said. "We need to merge these into one campaign. Our kitchen is severely antiquated with absolutely no kitchen flow. It's by no means a commercial kitchen. We have no signage or lighting on the front of our new businesses (the Copper Bar or the Wine Shoppe) to tell people who or what we are. We have done our menus on our home computers, even created our logo ourselves."

Lovetts Snoots, Fish, Chicken and More manager Brad Chavours said the staff visited the restaurant Wednesday. He said they took a tour of the establishment and then doubled back to eat lunch.

“They were really, really, really cool,” he said. “They came in and got snoots and rib tips combo, some catfish fillets and I even threw in some free fried Kool-Aid, because they never heard of that before and seemed amazed by it.”

If Lovetts is chosen, Chavours said he wanted the help of Deluxe Corporation to repair a vintage soda fountain – a relic from the building's time as a drug store. He said people come into the establishment, see the old soda fountain and become instantly reminded of enjoying old-timey sodas. If it were to be repaired, Chavours said people could come into Lovetts and enjoy an inter-generational treat.

“Kids can come in with their parents and grandparents, and everyone can enjoy a soda the way it used to be – the way folks remember it 30 or 50 years ago,” he said.

Alton recording studio Lighthouse Sounds was also visited by the staff of *The Small Business Revolution*. The studio is currently in the process of moving their location from Market Street across from Lincoln-Douglas Square to Broadway in the old Fireplace Store building. Once completely renovated, the new location will feature some retail space alongside the current offerings of recording studio and practice space for bands.

Manager Alex St. Cin said if they are chosen for the six businesses featured on the show, Lighthouse Sounds would like to expand its reach to people. He said too many people come into the studio with their friends, who are clients, and tell St. Cin they had no idea the business even existed, despite being located in Alton for nearly two years now.

St. Cin described himself as excited and optimistic by visiting with the staff. He said they came into the studio Wednesday afternoon around 3 p.m. After a tour of the studio, St. Cin said the staff of Lighthouse Sounds – a close-knit family of friends – discussed their past and future with the staff.

“We discussed a bit about our backstory and how the studio came to be,” he said. “We mentioned that father had passed away, and that he used the money left to him by his dad to help us begin the studio. We then discussed our plans for the future and what we plan to do with our new building. After our chat and tour of the current studio, we went to the new building to show them that as well.”

Mississippi Mud Pottery also received a call for a meeting set for Thursday afternoon. Business co-owner Felicia Breen said she understands the meeting is just a way for the organization to meet with them and learn more about the business, adding whoever is selected will be great for Alton.

“Although this does not mean we are in the selected 12 for a film interview, I think they are just learning more,” Breen said in a Facebook message. “They were on College and Main yesterday. They will still narrow to 12, then to six. I guess it's a pre-interview interview.”