

# Alton Main Street capitalizing on #OurAlton campaign to better unite local businesses

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ALTON – To further capitalize on the craze of #OurAlton, a Broadway business owner has partnered with Alton Main Street to unite the small business owners who call Alton home.

Abbey Ontis, the owner of Wish and Wear Dress Rentals, had the idea to unite local business owners through Alton Main Street. Ontis said she watched the season finales of the first two seasons of *The Small Business Revolution*, noting the six small businesses chosen to be showcased on the programs had become what she described as “a tight-knit family” at the end of the seasons' runs. She said she wanted to invoke that sort of kinship before the six businesses were even chosen for the show.

This campaign, which is being supported by Alton Main Street, would create a photo gallery on Alton Main Street's Facebook page ([www.Facebook.com/AltonMainStreet](http://www.Facebook.com/AltonMainStreet)) of local business owners and businesses. An email was sent from Alton Main Street Executive Director Sara McGibany to several local businesses asking them to apply for a profile.

“Using Alton’s big win being named as the next town to have \$500,000 from the Small Business Revolution infused into our small businesses, an idea was born,” the email to the businesses states. “Alton Main Street will be creating a campaign to profile the owners of all of the small businesses in town. Only 6 will be chosen for a makeover, so it is vital that we capitalize on this opportunity and get the word out to our local community and beyond about ALL of the awesome locally-owned businesses that Alton has to offer. This is your chance to put a face to your business name, tell the world about your aspirations for the future, and gain the support of new customers.”

Ontis, who is chair of the campaign, said she approached McGibany and Alton Main Street, because they would know the right people to contact for such a vision. She said she has been located on Broadway for more than a year, and has yet to feel the sort of connection she sees in Wabash, Indiana, and Bristol Borough, Pennsylvania at the end of the first and second seasons respectively. She said she believes now is the best time to foster it, while there is collective hope across all 220-plus businesses that applied for the \$500,000 in grants to be distributed among the six chosen businesses.

“When those six businesses are chosen, I don't want all that energy of #OurAlton to be lost,” Ontis said. “We should steer it in another direction and get everyone who applied to be on the show to be involved. This was the brainchild of it all. It's really something to connect us all as business owners.”

Currently, staff from *The Small Business Revolution* are in town conducting additional interviews with local business owners to attempt to narrow the inundation of more than 220 applicants to 12 they can interview on film, before whittling it to six to ultimately be featured on the show. That announcement of those six will take place on March 23 at a city-wide party in front of Bluff City Grill on Broadway.

In the future, Ontis hopes the movement can evolve from pictures and profiles on Alton Main Street's Facebook to face-to-face meetings and maybe even combined promotions. Ontis believes one day businesses across Alton can join together for cross-promotional events and possibly even ambitious endeavors such as city-wide scavenger hunts – a sentiment with which McGibany agrees whole-heartedly.

“The ultimate goal is to introduce locals and tourists alike to the faces of our small business community,” she said via Facebook message. “We are confident that, once people start getting to know the human beings who operate mom-and-pop shops, they will be much more likely to think of their stores first before going to a big box store. More people are waking up to the fact that profits from a locally-owned business stay in the community instead of being sent away to benefit a corporation's shareholders and CEO.”

Since sending the email, McGibany said 15 businesses have responded in the last couple of days. She said they are asking when the deadline for submission is, and she says there is no deadline. The album and campaign will officially be launched on Alton Main Street's Facebook page after 25 or more submissions have been accepted – a goal she has set for next week.

This campaign is not connected to *The Small Business Revolution* directly, nor is it sponsored by the Deluxe Corporation.

Submissions for inclusion in the profiles can be sent [here](#).