

# Showcasing the Six: Morrison's Irish Pub

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ALTON – After serving as the after-party headquarters for nearly every city-wide exciting announcement from *The Small Business Revolution*, Morrison's Irish Pub was named as one of the six chosen by the show's sponsors, Minneapolis-based Deluxe Corporation, to split an investment sum of \$500,000 for business improvements.

The other businesses chosen from a pool of more than 220 applicants from across the entire city were: Lighthouse Sounds, Lovett's, Sham Pooches, Today's Beauty Supply and Bluff City Outdoors. One of Morrison's three family owners and managers, Katey Vankirk, said she was hopeful the attention and funding from Deluxe Corporation and *The Small Business Revolution* could help bring more people not only into the doors of the pub, but also to Alton in general.

“It's a beautiful city,” Vankirk said. “People have a not necessarily bad, but definitely a down outlook on Alton. And they really shouldn't. It's a beautiful place.”

Further evidence of Alton's goodness, as well as the success of Morrison's in general can be found through a St. Louis media outlet choosing it as the best place to spend St. Patrick's Day in the St. Louis Area – even when compared to some of the more well-known Irish pubs in St. Louis itself – in 2017.

“They sent a crew of people out to all the Irish pubs in the area before St. Patrick's Day last year,” Vankirk said. “They picked us as the best place to spend St. Patrick's Day, because of its authenticity. A member of our 'pub family' brought the article to the bar and was so happy to show us.”

Things like referring to dedicated patrons as “pub family” adds to the authenticity created by Irish family recipes and a huge selection of Irish Whiskey and other adult beverages. In fact, the business was opened 48 hours after Vankirk returned from Ireland, where she got married.

“I don't know we did it like that, but it worked,” Vankirk said.

Morrison's Irish Pub opened in 2015 by three Irish family members who not only own, but still run the day-to-day aspects of the pub. Most of the aspects of the pub itself were designed by the family.

“Those tables you eat on and that bar you drink on were all built by us in about two months,” Vankirk said. “We keep everything as authentically Irish as possible, and we connect with our customers. They are our pub family, and we wouldn't be here without them.”

When asked about being the reception pub of choice for the staff of *The Small Business Revolution*, including host Amanda Brinkman, and several rowdy revelers, Vankirk said she had a great time.

“It was a good party,” she said. “There was a lot of whiskey flowing.”

After Morrison's Irish Pub was announced as one of the six chosen businesses, Vankirk said she felt both “excited” and “privileged” to have been chosen, especially after meeting so many of the other business owners with whom they were in a sort of competition. She said, after meeting many of the other business owners in Alton as patrons, it “put fuel in the fire to know Morrison's could survive and keep going.”

As for the show goes, Vankirk said she has “no expectations,” adding she hopes the show and Deluxe Corporation can work to bring more people to Alton, and that those people will go to Morrison's while they're in town.