

Shake it up: Warm Soda hopes to connect creatives outside Facebook

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
June 19 2018 11:33 AM



ALTON – The Riverbend area has a stunning amount of creatives – from artists to makers to writers and thespians, people in the area enjoy flexing their creative muscles.

One group of such folk have created a way for these types to network outside the digital grind of social media. Through an online publication called “Warm Soda Magazine,” the group hopes to connect people in a more organic and traditional sense, by bringing together people in the same space who are working on similar goals. To illustrate this,

the publication is hosting its first art gallery at Old Bakery Beer Company from June 27-29, which will feature artists from areas spanning from SIUE to Blackburn.

Warm Soda was founded by two women with a background in editorial work as well as artistic design. Childhood friends, Lauren Leady and Shelby Clayton, worked at *The Bridge* newspaper at Lewis and Clark Community College. Leady has also worked at small journalistic establishments and Clayton has a background in art and graphic design. Clayton said Leady came to her with an idea to bring creatives together through a magazine, and wondered if she could lend her talents to making it work. She agreed.

Now with a staff hovering around a dozen, the niche publication is making some strong headway in the area.

“We're striving to bring the art community in one place and help people meet and collaborate on a deeper level and talk more,” Leady said. “I know a lot of people don't really like using social media for their work, because it is a less personal experience. They want more feedback on their work.”

When asked what artists lack in the Riverbend, Clayton said, “support.” She said people often have to travel to Edwardsville for any art supplies at all, and as far as the St. Louis Loop in University City if they want high-quality supplies. She said St. Louis also has resources, such as its artists' guild, which work to support fellow artists and makers with their efforts and works.

On the positive side, though, Clayton said Alton has an absolute plethora of people doing and making things as well as educational institutions dedicated to helping them. She praised the art programs of SIUE, Lewis and Clark Community College and Blackburn in Carlinville.

Artists from each of those institutions will be featured at the art gallery being hosted at the end of this month at Old Bakery Beer Company. Leady said Old Bakery Beer Company co-owner Lauren Pattan contacted them and asked if they would like to have a gallery there. They happily agreed, and found 40 mixed media pieces to place.

More such galleries are in the future for Warm Soda, both Clayton and Leady agreed. They are also working on both a quarterly online publication and even a physical copy of it. As for the art community, they said they are working on developing creative workshops for writers and visual artists.

As for the name, apparently it was an unforgettable moment in a brainstorming session.

“We were having a brainstorming session, and someone brought up warm soda, and it just sort of derailed the entire conversation,” Clayton said. “So, since we couldn't stop talking about it, it became the name.”

More information can be found on the publication's [Facebook](#) page, and people can RSVP for the art gallery and receive updates by following the [event page](#).